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Official Magazine - Australia

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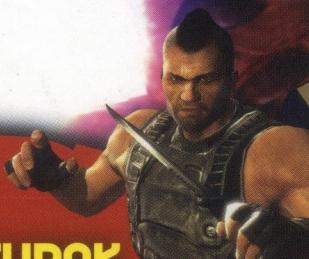
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OUT NOW



TIMESHIFT

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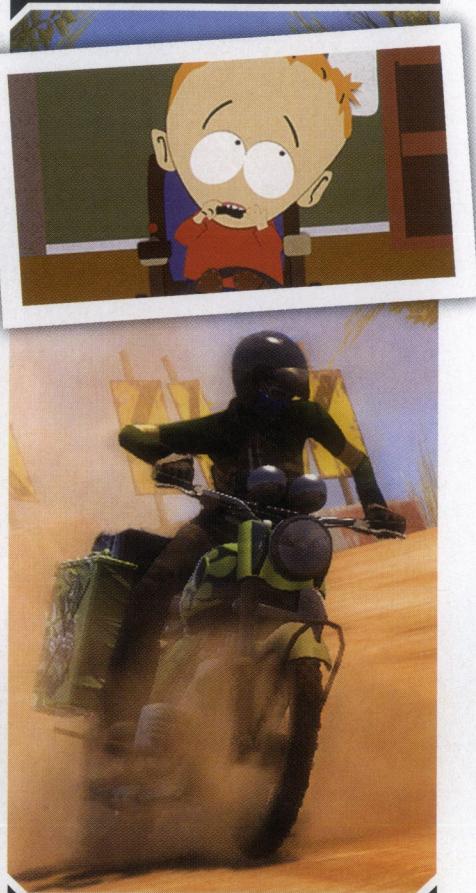


COVER STORY

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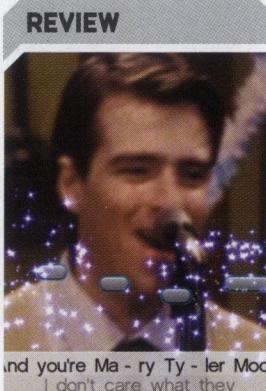
Capcom's grey haired hero gets ousted for... another grey haired hero. 60 fps buttery goodness awaits...

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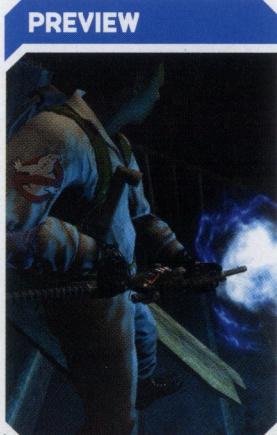
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And you're Ma - ry Ty - ler Moon
I don't care what they

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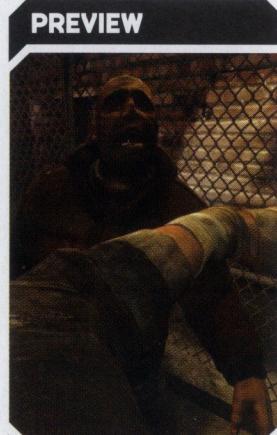
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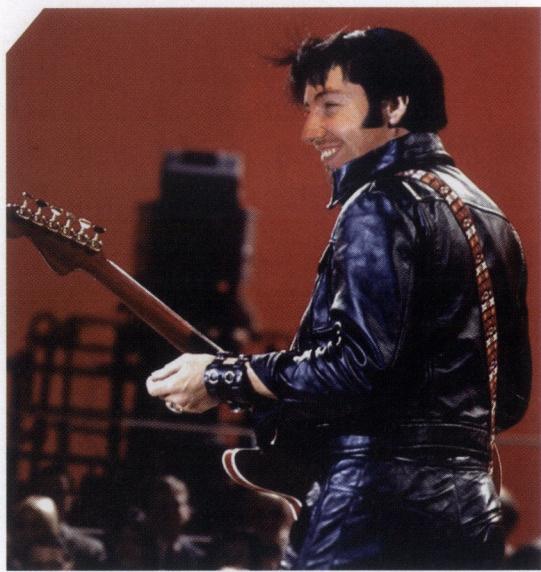
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“...no one could accuse Elvis of being a ‘glass is half empty’ kind of guy.”

Why Elvis? Are you kidding? Picking The King's a no brainer. He revolutionised rock 'n' roll, becoming the most famous performer in history. Even thirty years after his death no one's come close to the impact Elvis has had on music and pop culture. Oh... and he's sold more than a billion records!

Although he arguably loved life a little too hard – his worst vice being a steady diet of deep fried peanut butter and banana sandwiches washed down with prescription drugs – no one could accuse Elvis of being a ‘glass is half empty’ kind of guy. And that's exactly the sort of spirit I suspect is needed right now in the gaming community. With the absolutely monstrous 2007 Christmas line-up behind us it'd be all too easy to fall into a depressed funk over having to wait another year for the next Christmas rush. Realistically though, the incredible games you're devouring now are just the start of a steady stream of games that will just keep getting better. Releasing in the next couple of weeks you've got *Burnout Paradise*, *Devil May Cry 4*, *The Club*, *Turok* and *Condemned 2* and then a few short weeks after that the granddaddy of all games, *Grand Theft Auto IV*, will be here. And those titles are just the start of killer year of gaming unlike anything we've seen before. Thank ya vury much.

NARAYAN PATTISON, Editor

Narayan Pattison

PS3 online: [The_Duude](#)

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SHOUT OUTS: Robocop's "Movember" effort :: Happy Birthday Bella - love Jayde

Fave SingStar legends...

LUKE REILLY

Gene Simmons once told a radio jock he had bedded more than one thousand women, and that, "If you want to welcome me with open arms, I'm afraid you're also going to have to welcome me with open legs." Legend.

Online: [Capt_Flashheart](#)



MARK SERRELS

These guys are more Scottish than porridge and haggis combined. I would walk 500 miles to say that The Proclaimers are the third best thing to come out of Scotland – behind me and Sean Connery.

Online: [Serrels](#)



PHILLIP JORGE

Me and the Fresh Prince have a lot in common, I also has the ability to "boom shake shake the room" – when I destroy everyone at COD4. Are y'all ready for me yet? Tick Tick tick BOOM!

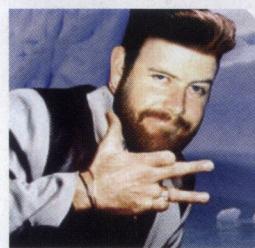
Online: [PhiLLipO](#)



ADAM MATHEW

How can anybody player hate Vanilla Ice. G kept it so real. If he wasn't rollin' in his 5-0 with the ragtop down so his hair could blow, he'd be cooking your MC like a pound of bacon. Word to your mother.

Online: [YourmumsAWESOME](#)



ANTHONY O'CONNOR

I've always wanted to be Trent Reznor. So intense, so sweaty and so pissed off. Also the groupies. Man, Trent's pasty white body must look like a zebra with all the black lipstick on it.

Online: [stoxys242](#)



JAMES ELLIS

Any woman who can put up with "Iron" Ike Turner, pull off that hair, and still have a booty fit for pillaging despite being a granny scores two thumbs up from me. Please, as if y'all haven't grooved to 'Nutbush City Limits'.

Online: [gtfaster49](#)



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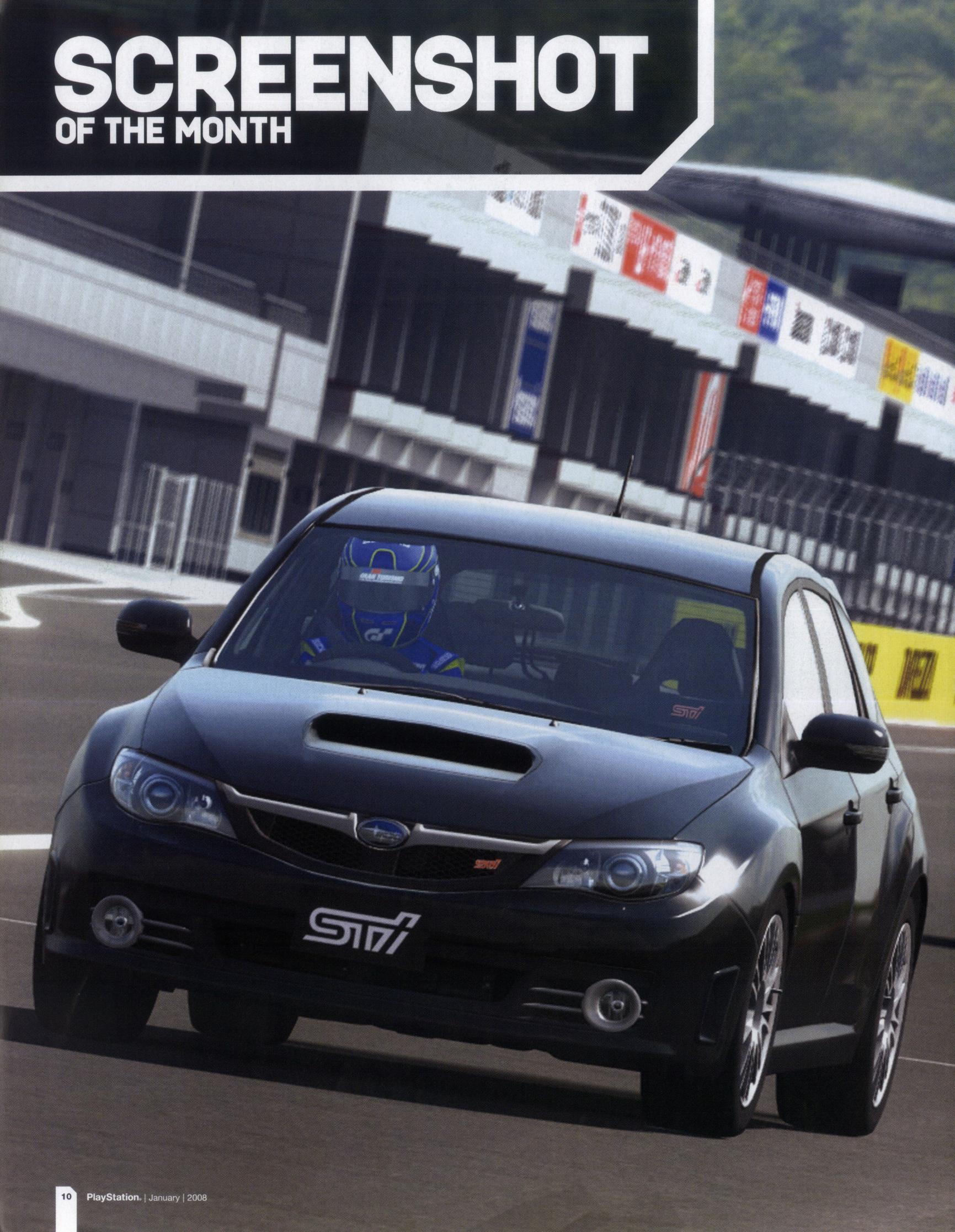
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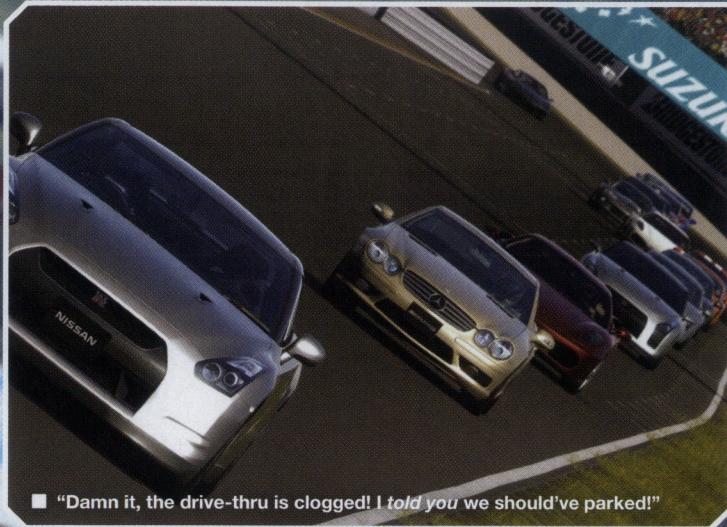
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SCREENSHOT OF THE MONTH



Gran Turismo 5 Prologue: Break's over kiddies, Daddy's back. Running in 1080p at 60fps, with graphics that genuinely look lifelike, *Prologue* is one hell of a technical achievement. Prepare to be blown away...



Gaming's latest and greatest...

BUZZ

Rumble returns in Japan, Rock Band scores South Park's Timmy, Atari's troubles, Haze delay, eGames report, and much, much more...

PS3 PS2 PSP

EARTHQUAKE!?

No... just the new DualShock 3 doing its thing

The troubles Sony experienced in trying to include rumble technology in its SIXAXIS controller are well documented, but we can shred those documents now: the DualShock 3 is, at last, here. Or at least, it's here... in Japan. (The rest of the world won't get the new pad until Spring 2008. Grrrrgh...)

The DualShock 3 officially went on sale in Japan on November 11, coinciding with the launch of a new 40GB PS3 hardware version. The new PS3 is available in black and ceramic white, and is bundled with a DualShock 3 in the appropriate colour. Spare DualShock 3s are available in both black and white, and they sell for 5,500yen (which is about AU\$55) – although some stores are selling them for just 4,950yen (AU\$50). We managed to pick up two DualShock 3s – one in either colour – so let's tell you all about them.

For a start, they rumble. Yep, that's obvious, but it's also virtually the only factor to differentiate the DualShock 3 from a standard SIXAXIS controller. And as a result of its vibration motors, it's also significantly heavier than the SIXAXIS. This isn't a bad thing as such – it just makes the DualShock 3 feel more substantial in your hands. If you're like us, the original SIXAXIS was so light that we occasionally forgot we were even holding it – that won't happen with the DualShock 3.

The rumble action itself is by turns subtle and thumping, depending on what you're playing and what's happening in the game. The demo of *Gran Turismo 5 Prologue* really comes alive when played with a DualShock 3, every slight undulation on the Suzuka track (particularly the rumble strips on the track edge) and, of course, every instance of contact with other cars, is relayed at just the right frequency. Polyphony Digital clearly knew that the DualShock 3 was on its way and had the opportunity to develop *GT5* (and *Prologue*) with the new pad in mind.

In other PS3 titles, such as *Ratchet & Clank Future* and *Dynasty Warriors 6*, we get the impression that DualShock 3 compatibility was a last-minute inclusion, as the only real force feedback in these games occurs at the most obvious points – explosions and attacks – and there's no subtlety about it. Most developers now likely have DualShock 3s, though, so the future of rumbling PS3 games should follow *Gran Turismo 5 Prologue*'s impressive lead.

Surprisingly, battery life in the DualShock 3 seems to be pretty much on a par with the rumble-free SIXAXIS – it's a relief to find that we don't have to pay for rumble with frequent recharging. We're also happy to report that PS2 games played on our Japanese 60GB PS3 (the 40GB model has no backwards compatibility), running the 2.00 firmware, rumble like they always did. And, to cap it all, the SIXAXIS motion-sensing technology is still part of the overall package.



Ready to Rumble

Some first-generation PS3 releases have been patched up with rumble functions to cater for DualShock 3 owners. These include *MotorStorm*, *Formula One Championship Edition*, *Heavenly Sword* and *Resistance*. Several PSN titles – including *Blast Factor*, *Warhawk* and *Super Stardust HD* – also vibrate with the DualShock 3. And next year's big hitters, such as *Metal Gear Solid 4*, *Metal Gear Online*, *Resident Evil 5* and *Devil May Cry 4*, are all being developed to rumble.





TIMMY!!

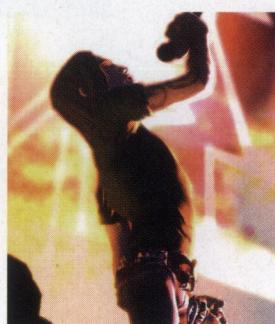
Timmy...? TIMMY!

Fans of South Park may remember the 'poop in your pants' hilarious episode where Timmy (who is disabled and can only say his name 'Timmy' repeatedly) formed the rock band Timmy and the Lords of the Underworld – well believe it or not the song that catapulted them to fame in that episode has now been revealed as a secret track in the upcoming *Rock Band*.

No word yet on whether you'll be able to sing through the song as Timmy (please please please...), but the whole thing would kinda be pointless if you couldn't, so the odds are pretty good.

This song is just one of the unlockable secret tracks that were recently announced for *Rock Band*; here is the list in full:

- Acro-brats – 'Day Late Dollar Short'
- Anarchy Club – 'Blood Doll'
- Bang Camaro – 'Pleasure (Pleasure)'
- Crooked X – 'Nightmare'
- Death of the Cool – 'Can't Let Go'
- Flyleaf – 'I'm So Sick'
- Freezepop – 'Brainpower'
- Honest Bob – 'I Get By'
- The Konks – '29 Fingers'
- The Mother Hips – 'Time We Had'
- Timmy & The Lords of the Underworld – 'Timmy & The Lords of the Underworld'
- Tribe – 'Outside'
- VAGIANT – 'Seven'



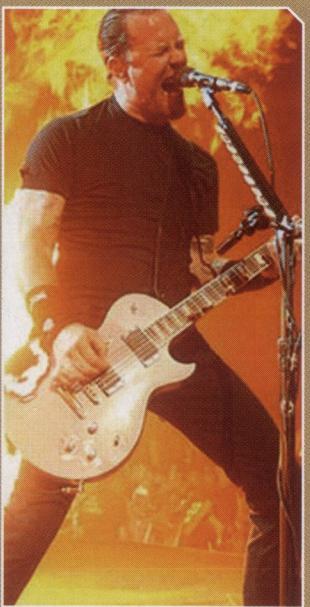
ENCORE!

Those Gods of Rock at Harmonix have also recently announced details on the downloadable content available for *Rock Band* from launch.

The list is pretty impressive, with Metallica, Black Sabbath, and Queens of the Stone age all making an appearance with 3-packs available for \$5.49US.

Individual Songs are also available at \$1.99US each, with Radiohead, Weezer, The Clash, The Ramones, and David Bowie all available for purchase upon release. Seems like a pretty sweet deal to us.

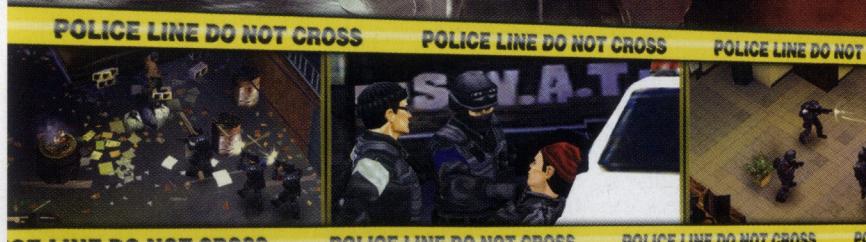
We expect that all these songs and much more will be available on the PlayStation Store when the game is launched in Australia in 2008.



IT'S TIME TO TAKE BACK THE STREETS!

SWAT

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"SWAT has an air of authenticity. You can almost smell the cordite."

Official PlayStation Magazine

WWW.SWATPSP.COM



Moderate violence,
Moderate coarse
language

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BUZZ

INFO NUDGE

Prodding you in the ribs with all the latest newsbites...

ANOTHER GTA DELAY?

Relax... this one is a complete and utter rumour. The internet was buzzing with the possibility that *GTA IV* may slip even further past its delayed release into the second half of 2008, but that

rumour was quickly debunked by Take Two head honcho Strauss Zelnick, who pretty much reaffirmed Rockstar's insistence that the game will be ready when it's ready. Nothing concrete as of yet, sadly...

SCARED OF THE DARK?

Well the PS2 apparently isn't, since the reimagining of *Alone in the Dark* is now making its way to the console. Having been previously announced for the PS3, *Alone in the Dark* is now being developed in parallel with the next gen version in order to adapt to the technical weaknesses of the PS2. Look out for an in-depth preview at some point in the near future.

I'LL BE BACK... AGAIN

When the Terminator says he'll be back, you have to believe the dude, cause it seems like those buggers never give up. Evidence in case:

Terminator Salvation: The Future Begins, a game based on the upcoming movie, which is just about to begin shooting. The developers stress this game is not going to be a half assed licensed crapstorm, and will be treated with the same importance as the movie. We'll see...

PLAYSTATION STORE... ON PC?

Yep, you read right, you can actually now download media direct from your PC to the PSP on a newly-established

PlayStation Store on the web. Head to www.store.playstation.com for a range of PSP content, video trailers, and the like. You can log into this using your PS3 login, or create a PSN account from scratch. We look forward to checking out this website for more content in the coming months.

WHAT'S HOT AND WHAT'S NOT...

Devil May Cry 4

60 fps (drool). This game is smooooooth...



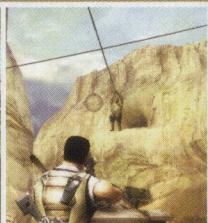
COD4 Multiplayer

Yup, we don't actually work anymore...



Logan's Shadow

Now we actually look forward to the train...



Beowulf

A new watermark for generic mediocrity...



DualShock 3

Stupid Japan. Why are you so special?



Rock Band

Stupid America. Why are you so special?



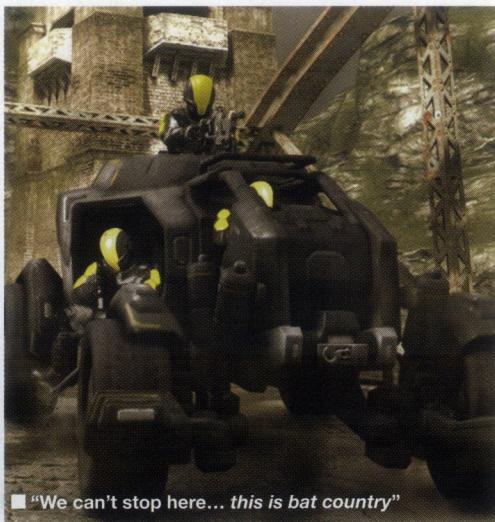
Haze

Dun dun dun. Another one bites the dust...



HOT!

NOT!



■ "We can't stop here... this is bat country"

PS3 PS2 PSP

HAZE DELAY...

After initially being pushed back towards the middle of December, we had high hopes that *Haze* would make its scheduled Christmas 2007 release date. Sadly those hopes were thoroughly 'dashed' when Ubisoft recently announced that the game had been pushed back.

Now scheduled for release between January and March, it seems that developer Free Radical was reluctant to put out the game until it was positively finished to its fullest potential. While it's disappointing that yet another third party Sony exclusive has been delayed from its touted 2007 release, we're confident it will be better all round for the game itself.

It's not as if there's a shortage of games to play this Christmas, regardless.

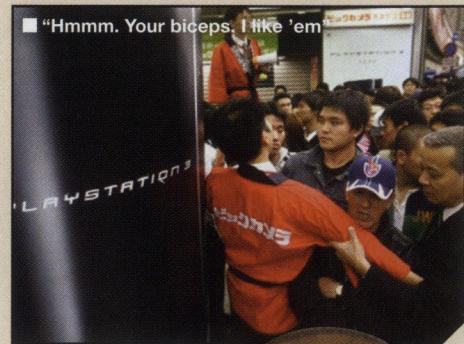
PS3 OUTSELLS WII... IN JAPAN!

It seems that the release of the new 40GB model has accelerated sales of PS3 considerably. Only last month we reported on the huge impact the price drop had made in the UK and in Australia.

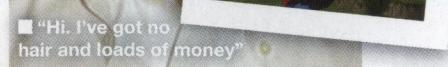
Now even Japan, which has begun an insane love affair with the Nintendo Wii, has come running back to Sony in droves, proving that price, and not quality of product, was the main barrier for purchase worldwide.

In fact in the week of the price drop, sales figures show that the PS3 outsold the Wii by almost two to one, and outsold the Xbox 360 by an astonishing ten to one.

The release of the DualShock 3 controller and a new 'ceramic white' PS3 also seemed to fuel increased sales. Expect to see similar results here in Australia when rumble makes its belated return to our shores. Remember: it's a marathon, not a sprint, people!



■ "Hmmm. Your biceps. I like 'em"



■ "Hi. I've got no hair and loads of money"

■ "Haze Delay..."

GOING UNDER?

Atari in dire straits...

After reporting another quarterly loss (of US\$11.9 million), the future of Atari as we know it is in extreme jeopardy, with the company itself claiming it has "substantial doubt" regarding its "ability to continue". In addition, the CEO of Atari, David Pierce, recently handed in his resignation.

Yep, things are looking bleak for the former videogaming giant. Atari has been selling off all its studios of late in an attempt to break even. Even Atari's ace in the hole (*the Dragon Ball Z* videogames) is in danger of being lost, as license holder FUNimation believes that Atari is currently guilty of a breach of contract.

It's a grim outlook, with Atari currently considering the possibility of focusing on merchandising and online gaming as a source of revenue, as opposed to the more expensive risk of developing high profile games for next gen hardware.

Atari already disappeared from the market back in the '90s before being resurrected by Infogrames and things aren't looking too good this time either.

VERSION 2.00

Firmware upgrade 2.00: sounds epic doesn't it?

After months of 1.somethings, we've been longing to make the big step up, and it's finally here.

Maybe waiting so long for that one digit to change has heightened expectations to unquenchable heights, but we can't help but feel a 'teensy weensy' bit underwhelmed at what should have been a bigger and better update.

Let's start with what's not there. The ability to send messages in game is still sadly absent. If you want to reply to your online buddies you will still have to save your game, go back to the cross media bar and reply that way.

The ability to play your own music in game is also seemingly late to the firmware party. Why can't we listen to The Village People's 'In the Navy' while playing *Call of Duty 4*? We so want to do that...

But let's turn our focus to what the new update actually allows you to do. Firstly, for those who are fans of the remote play function, but don't particularly fancy leaving their PS3 on all day just to access it, there is a new remote *start* function. And there is a cool new info board, that at the moment feeds you Sony sponsored news regarding PS Store stuff and the likes, but apparently later on in the day we'll be able to add other feeds to the board and get news direct to our PS3.

PS3 owners will now have the ability to create and share their own cross media bar themes. So if you hate the standard one you have now, you can download more 'wacky' or 'out there' themes to your hearts content. Finally, support for the upcoming DualShock 3 controller, with added rumble, has been included as well.

Overall, a bit underwhelming, but many useful additions nonetheless.

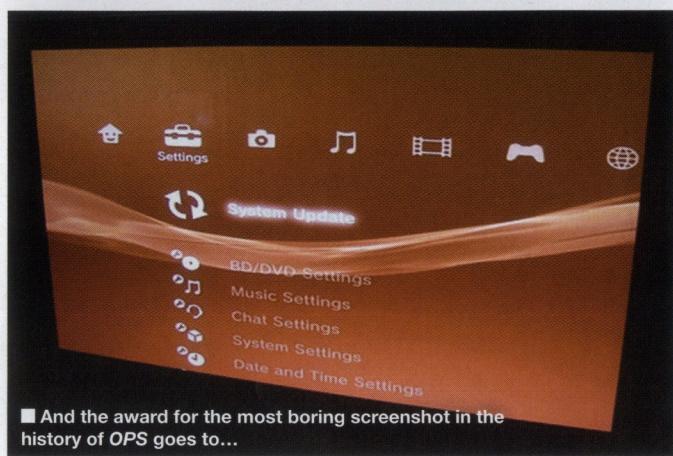
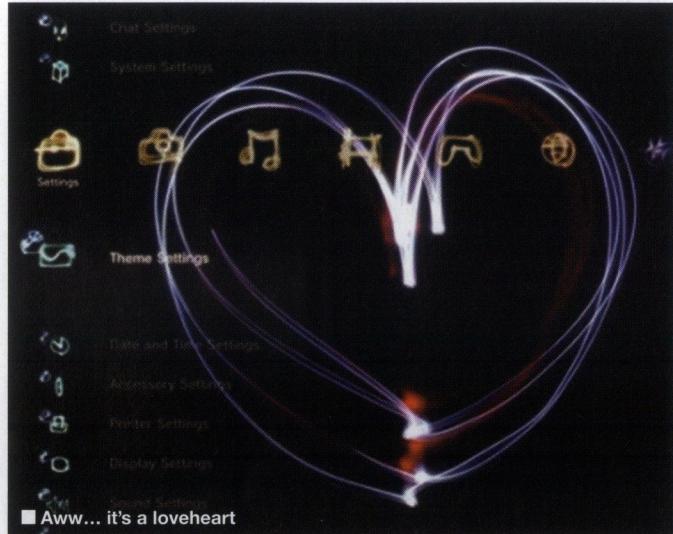
FINALLY!

PS3 owners sick of the insane hassle of taking AVI movie files and the like and painstakingly transcoding them to MP4 should start rejoicing... NOW!

Because DivX, Inc. has recently announced that the PS3 will be able to use this popular format, pushing the console one step closer to being the ultimate modern home media centre. We have no idea what caused this change of heart, but we suspect

future downloadable television via the PlayStation Store may be one of the major reasons for the turnaround.

There's very little information regarding the different file formats that will now be watchable, but we'll have details as soon as they're released. No word yet as to when the new update will become available, but we expect it will come sooner rather than later, possibly in the next firmware update.



■ And the award for the most boring screenshot in the history of OPS goes to...

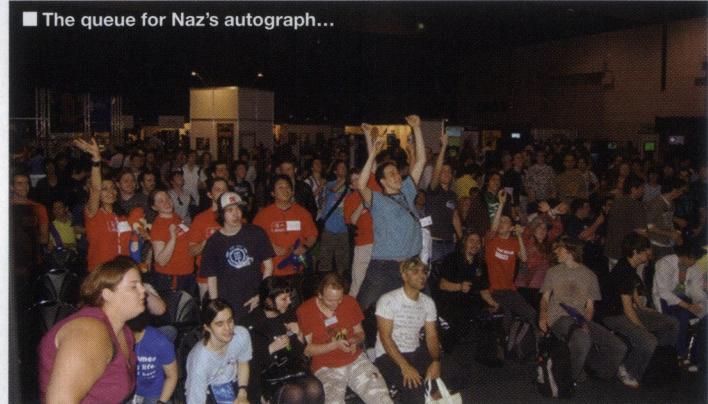


BIRD'S EYE VIEW

For some reason, *all* girls love *SingStar*. Even if they've never once gotten their dainty little paws around a traditional controller, the minute they get that mic in their clasp, they won't let go; like all those hours spent wailing into a hairbrush has all been building up to this one moment – their one time to shine. But do you know what's even weirder? *Guys* love *SingStar*. I've seen Mark's face twisted in ecstasy, bawling out the chorus to Toto's 'Africa' in a bizarre Scottish falsetto. Luke bawling out 'Creep' at full tilt. The guys pretend they don't want to sing, but when the mic is placed in their hand something clicks. It would be a beautiful thing, if it wasn't so God awful to listen to...

Jessica Greene, Games Writer

■ The queue for Naz's autograph...



FUN AND EGAMES

Following on from the success of the first eGames event, Melbourne was once again host to Australia's biggest games convention in November 2007. More than 16,000 consumers braved the Spring heat to visit the eGames and score sneak peaks at the PS3's biggest Christmas releases.

The highlight of this year's event was the keynote speech given by Insomniac's Brian Allgeier and Ryan Schneider, who provided commentary for one of *Ratchet & Clank Future: Tools of Destruction*'s levels – kind of like the commentary tracks on DVDs but about 6,000 times better because it was live while the game

was played. In your face Spielberg!

An honourable mention also goes to Ubisoft – it had playable demos of the crowd-drawing *Assassin's Creed* and *Haze* (despite the game having been delayed until 2008). Best of all, Ubisoft was giving away a hotted up Dodge Caliber ST sporting cool *Haze* decals.

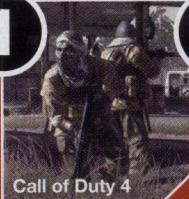
The second annual eGames event was a huge success and we're confident it will continue to gather even more momentum in following years.

Interesting side note – the eGames Media Badges could also be used to gain entry into the Sexpo event next door. Err... not that we tried or anything.

TOP 10 GAMES CHART



1



Call of Duty 4

2



Ratchet & Clank

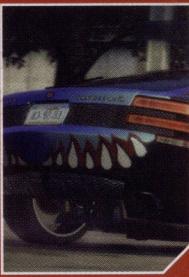
3



Guitar Hero III

Rank	Title	Category	Distributor
4	The Simpsons Game	Action	EA
5	LEGO Star Wars: The Complete Saga	Action	Activision
6	FIFA 08	Sports	EA
7	Pro Evolution Soccer 2008	Sports	Atari
8	Lair	Flight	Sony
9	Fight Night Round 3	Sports	EA
10	Juiced 2: Hot Import Nights	Racing	THQ

RELEASE SCHEDULE



Format	Title	Category	Distributor
JANUARY			
PS3	Haze	FPS	Ubisoft
PS3	Burnout Paradise	Racing	EA
PSP	Pro Evolution Soccer 2008	Sports	Atari
PS3	Flatout: Head On	Racing	Activision
PS3	Unreal Tournament 3	FPS	Red Ant

Format	Title	Category	Distributor
EARLY 2008			
PSP	N+	Puzzle	Atari
PS3	Turning Point: Fall of Liberty	Action	Atari
PSP	Downstream Panic	Puzzle	Atari
PSP	Metal Gear Solid: Graphic Novel	Media	Atari
PS3	Turok	FPS	Funtastic
PS3	Frontlines: Fuel of War	FPS	THQ
PS3	Gran Turismo 5 Prologue	Driving	Sony
PS3	Grand Theft Auto IV	Adventure	Rockstar
PS3	Metal Gear Solid 4	Action	Atari
PS3	Devil May Cry 4	Action	Activision
PS3	Enemy Territories: Quake Wars	FPS	Activision
PS3	Star Wars: The Force Unleashed	Action	Activision
PS3	Tom Clancy's EndWar	RTS	Ubisoft
PS3	Brothers in Arms Hell's Highway	FPS	Ubisoft
PS3	The Club	Action	Sega
PS3	Condemned 2	FPS	Sega
PS3	Viking: Battle for Asgard	Adventure	Sega
PS3	Army of Two	Action	EA
PS3	NFL Street 4	Sports	EA

TOP TEN: INSANELY TOUGH LEVELS



1 Game: Contra: Shattered Soldier

Section: All of it
Only Jesus could finish this game. And he'd need infinite continues.



5 Game: Shinobi

Section: All of it
Mediocre gameplay + hernia inducing difficulty level = we hate this game.



2 Game: Devil May Cry 3

Section: Dante Must Die!
On the Dante Must Die! difficulty mode, *Devil May Cry 3* is arguably the most difficult game of last generation. So difficult in fact that Capcom had to release a special edition of the game with toned down difficulty. No wonder Dante is such a whiny bitch.



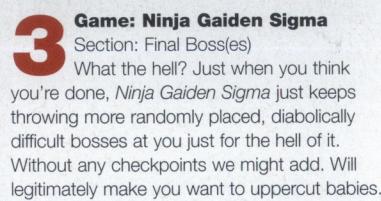
6 Game: Guitar Hero III

Section: The Devil
'Raining Blood', the Slayer song that precedes the Devil face off, was known to make fingers bleed. The final confrontation will make them go on fire and explode at the same time. Until someone proves otherwise: finishing this on expert is simply impossible.



7 Game: Call of Duty 4

Section: Ferris Wheel Sniping
Carry your injured comrade on your back, whilst planting craploads of mines whilst sniping the craploads of enemies that assault you from all angles... why don't they just throw in a couple of choppers for good measure? Oh wait... they just did.



3 Game: Ninja Gaiden Sigma

Section: Final Boss(es)
What the hell? Just when you think you're done, *Ninja Gaiden Sigma* just keeps throwing more randomly placed, diabolically difficult bosses at you just for the hell of it. Without any checkpoints we might add. Will legitimately make you want to uppercut babies.



8 Game: Heavenly Sword

Section: King Bohan
Yeah, all you little pussies out there will never know, never comprehend, how difficult King Bohan was in the original version of *Heavenly Sword*. In fact, it was so difficult that Sony actually reduced the difficulty for the game's retail release.

9 Game: MotorStorm

Section: The Final Races
You're hurtling towards the finish line, boosting hardcore, with the distinct feeling that your vehicle could explode at any given second. You begin to overtake, and a feeling of euphoria envelops you. It's at that exact moment, the bastard AI deliberately knocks you over the cliff.

10 Game: Metal Gear Solid 3

Section: The End
This is not so much difficult as completely epic. For many less patient MG3 players, this is where their journey came to an 'end'. Sniping it out with this 100 year old man tested your aim, your stalking skills, and your wits. Best boss battle ever.

WINNERS

From the comps in OPS #10

Hitman: S Dall, T Russell, A Vinson, A Busher, L Linklater, S Sullivan, D Grantham, M Threadgate, J Lockart, S Milgate, C Mawson, T Keegan, T Braines, L Playford, S Ward, B Evans. **Supernatural:** G Herrington, L Collier, B Green, S Read. **Entourage:** E Rossi, M Kane, S Fischer.





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XBOX 360

PC
DVD-ROM
SOFTWARE



PLAYSTATION 3



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COMPS

HARD TO KILL

John McClane is pretty much up there on the 'hardman' pedestal with Chuck Norris, Jack Bauer and Kratos, and probably the last man in the world you'd want as a father in law.

Yep, McClane has got a little older, but that doesn't mean he couldn't still kick your ass. On the contrary, he's got that old tough guy thing going on, and is still pretty much impossible to kill.

Despite the fact that most didn't expect much, *Die Hard 4.0* turned out to be one of the best action movies this year, and became a worthy entry into the best franchises in all of Hollywood.

John McClane gets in over his head once more in *Die Hard 4.0*, uncovering a tech conspiracy that our favourite badass is determined to stop. But of course McClane knows little to nothing about computers, so he enlists that nerdy guy from the Mac ads to help him in his quest to save the world.

As always we have some copies of this blockbuster to give away, eight to be precise – but that's not all. In addition to the fourth movie, we have copies of the first three to add into the whole package. Yep, that's right, you can win all four *Die Hard* movies in one fell swoop. All you have to do is answer one simple question and send the answer to us marked 'Die Hard 4.0 Giveaway' following the instructions on top of this very page. Yep, just up there on the top right! Get to it!

Question

Which famous cowboy originally used McClane's 'Yippee ki yay' catchphrase?

- A. Roy Rogers
- B. John Wayne
- C. Clint Eastwood
- D. Marty McFly

WIN!



USE THE (HUNGER) FORCE

Yes. *Aqua Teen* Hunger Force is a little bit out there. When your main characters are all actual fast food items that can talk, it's pretty safe to say that things are going to get a bit weird.

Filling out the bizarre cast is Master Shake, a belligerent self centred Milk Shake with a special power that enables him shoot milk everywhere, and make things explode. Then we have Meatwad, a surly hunk of beef that can shapeshift, and Frylock a box of French fries that can float in mid air. Oh, and he also conducts insane scientific experiments that tend to explode stuff.

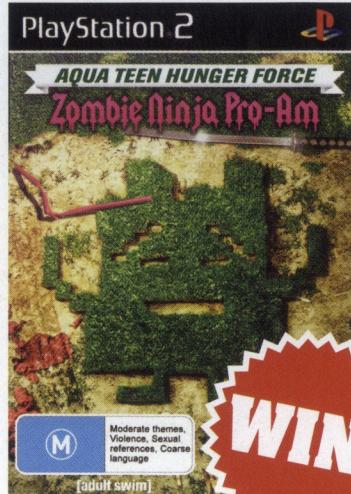
The show is crazy, and now these fools have a game, which is, of all things, a golf game in which you also get the chance to duke it out with the evil characters from the TV show. It also has the craziest name in videogame history. Just when you thought it couldn't get any stranger...

We have 10 copies to give away. Answer this simple question, send it to us marked 'Aqua Teen Hunger Force Giveaway', following the instructions above on page 20, and the game is yours our OPS reading chums.

Question:

***Aqua Teen Hunger Force* features on which network?**

- A. The Adult Channel
- B. [adult swim]
- C. The Adultery Channel



WIN!

"A BIT OF THE OLD ULTRAVIOLENCE"

This one's for the movie buffs. With five unforgettable movies all gracing the one stellar box set, you'd be a fool to pass on the Stanley Kubrick Collection. Featuring sci fi classic *2001: A Space Odyssey*, war classic *Full Metal Jacket*, horror classic... oh what the hell! They're all classics (except maybe *Eyes Wide Shut*, but that at least has some nudity).

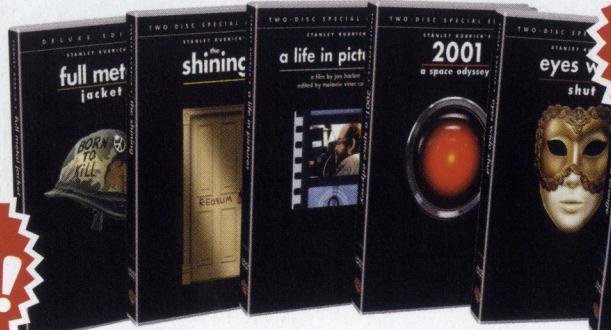
Regardless, this package is not one you'd want to miss out on, so thanks be to the gods above that we have four of these incredible DVD packages

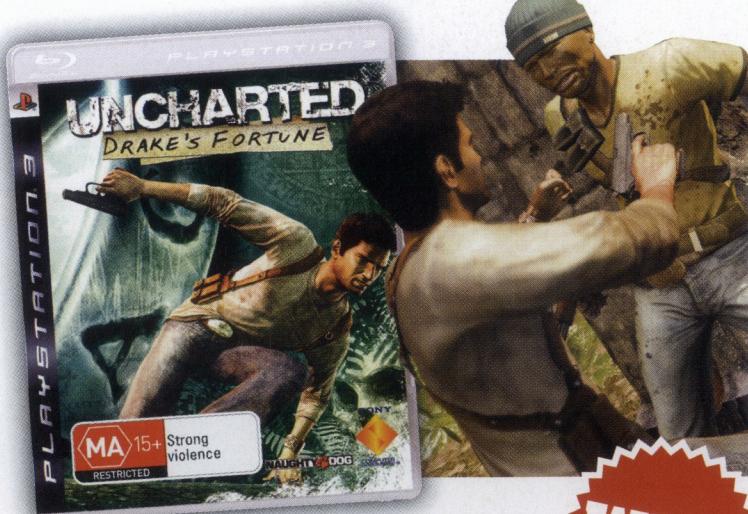
to give away this month. As usual the stipulation requires that you must submit an answer to this very simple question, and send it to us marked 'Kubrick Giveaway', following the instructions on top of this page. Go for it!

Question:

Which of these movies did Stanley Kubrick direct:

- A. Ben Hur
- B. Sparticus
- C. Spasticus





OPS 'HEARTS' UNCHARTED

WIN!

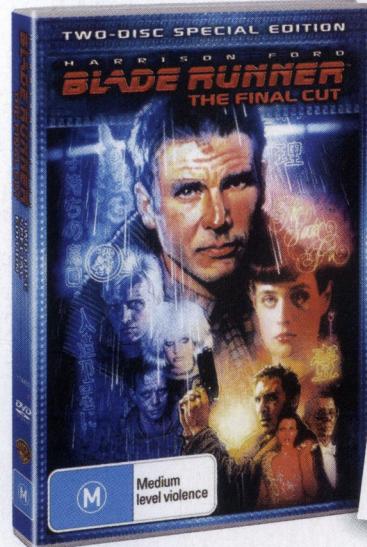
We love *Uncharted* so much. How much? Well, we think it is the 'bomb diggy' and we would like to marry it, move in together and have little *Uncharted* babies. Then we'd possibly have an acrimonious divorce, demand half of *Drake's Fortune* and retire happily ever after.

Yep, it got weird, but the bottom line is that *Uncharted: Drake's Fortune* is a game that you simply have to play. With the greatest graphics on any console, the best all round production values we've ever seen, and an uncanny ability to mix and match genres seamlessly, it's a real contender for game of the year.

Thankfully we have five copies to giveaway, and all you have to do to be in the running is answer one simple question, and send it to us marked '*Uncharted: Drake's Fortune* giveaway', following the instructions on page 20.

Question:
Nathan Drake claims to be the ancestor of which prominent historical figure?

- A. Sir Francis Drake
- B. Sir Lancelot
- C. Sir Elton John



"TIME TO DIE..."

the release we have 10 copies of this package to give away. Predictably, all you must do is answer one little simple question, and send it to us marked '*Blade Runner* giveaway', following the instructions on page 20.

Question:
Main character Richard Deckard was played by which legendary actor?

- A. Henry Ford
- B. Harrison Ford
- C. Ashton Kutcher

TIME TRAVELLING

TimeShift: it does exactly what it says on the tin – allows you to shift time. But in which direction? Mostly backwards, but you can also slow it down, or pause it completely. Why would you want to do this? Well mostly to kill people in cool new ways, but also to solve puzzles.

And via what means do you travel through time? Why the Alpha suit, designed and created by Dr Krone, the very same madman who becomes the antagonist of *TimeShift*, since he used his very own suit to travel back in time and install himself as ruler of the world.

This is the basic premise of the game: you must travel back in time with another suit and attempt to stop Dr Krone, with the very weapon he used to install his despotic reign: time.

We have three awesome *TimeShift* packs to giveaway, which includes, not only the game, but an incredible watch, that actually plays MP4 video clips, and a stylish *TimeShift* polo shirt. All you have to do is answer one simple question, and send it to us marked '*Timeshift* giveaway' following the instructions on page 20.

Question: In which year is *TimeShift* set?
 A. 1939
 B. 2699
 C. 2000 BC





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PG

Mild sexual
references

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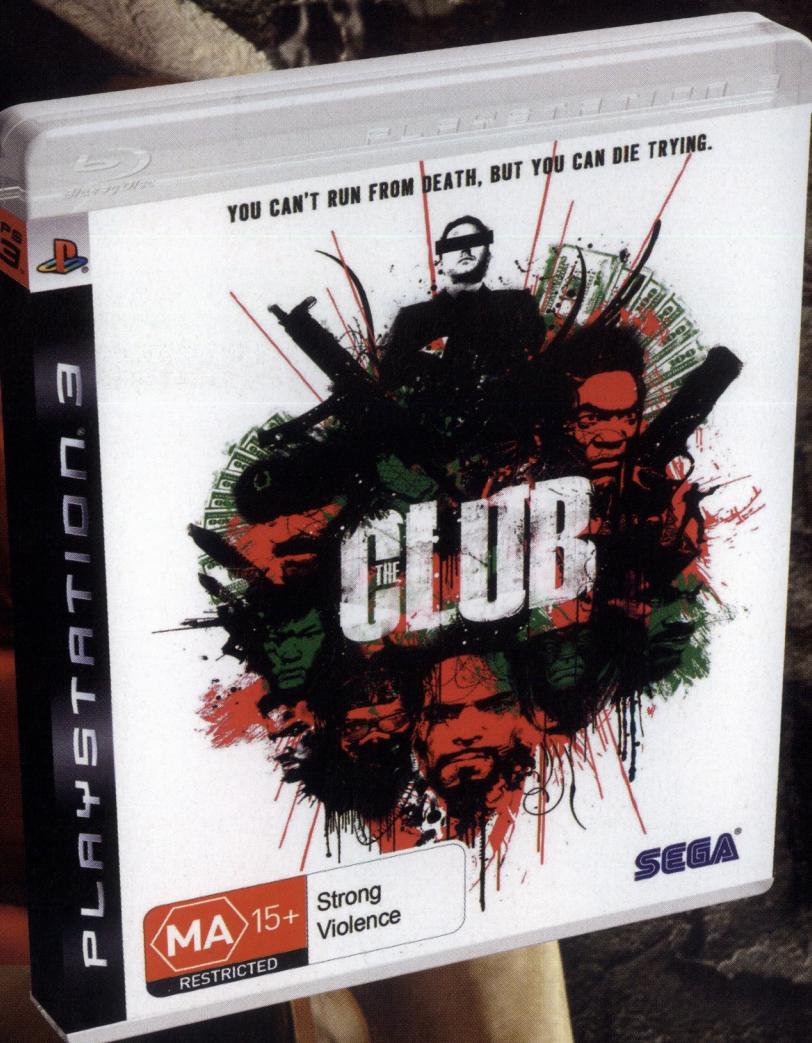


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LETTERS



■ Praying while walking: it's a lot harder than it looks

LETTER OF THE MONTH

DOG EAT DOGMA

Dear OPS, I was reading your coverage of Assassin's Creed when I started to feel uneasy. I think it's only a manner of time before videogames are criticised for religion. I don't actually know of many, save Resistance's use of Manchester Cathedral. Has there been any controversy over religion in gaming recently? Do you think Assassin's Creed, with its relatively religious backdrop (and murderous, devious... er, *frontdrop*) will score fierce opposition from either Christian or Muslim groups? If so, this might threaten the gaming industry as it has done with... well, so many other industries. That isn't to say I am against religion in games. Games like Civilization use religion to create a (relatively) realistic atmosphere, so maybe it has its place in games after

all. All I can hope is that religion is the last thing to get games in trouble. Pray (sorry), what do you think?

Ben Healey

Funnily enough Ben, the religion topic seems to be something the Ubisoft Montreal team has been concerned with throughout the development of Assassin's Creed. With what's going on in the Middle East you could argue that there is a direct parallel and commentary running throughout the game, and this is something that will come to the forefront when the game is released. In fact, there is actually a disclaimer at the beginning of Assassin's Creed that states the game was created by people of all religions and race. Hopefully AC will inspire intelligent debate as opposed to bigotry, but time will tell.



WINNER!

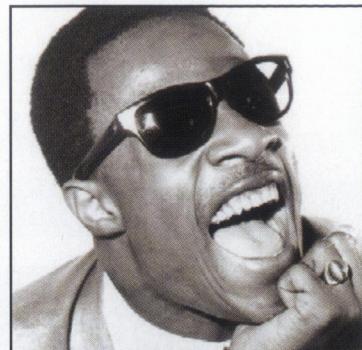
Letter of the month wins a copy of SingStar. Hey readers: shake it like a polaroid picture!

LEGLESS

There are many stupid gaming conventions that developers are still clinging to, but this one would have to be one of the oddest. Picture the scene: I'm immersed in a great FPS; the music, visuals, story, etc. have me engrossed. I look down at the ground... where the hell are my legs? Everything else on screen looks amazing, from the spine-tingling enemies, to the way glass breaks when you shoot at windows, but all immersion is lost when you realise you don't have a pair of legs and you're nothing but a floating pair of arms. Why is this still happening in 2007? Technical limitations no longer apply. Are developers just being lazy? Or are they completely overlooking this occurrence? There are games (*The Darkness*, *Rainbow Six Vegas*) that all include player bodies to great effect, but sadly, many AAA games don't bother. I for one, just want to look down and see that the character that I am playing actually exists in the game world.

Lance Millan

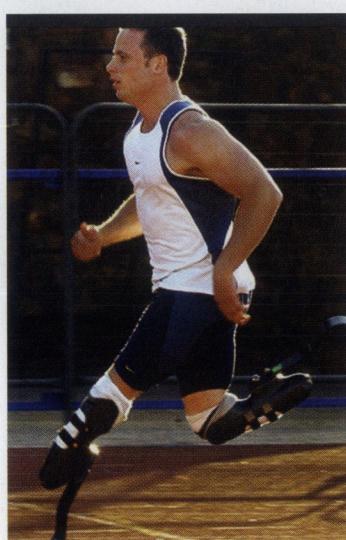
Sadly, the world is full of such nonsense Mr Millan, videogames are still plagued with the sorts of unspoken rules and clichés that continue to irritate and frustrate us. Why the hell can't Altair swim? Where the hell does Solid Snake keep that cardboard box? How can a wimpy blonde JRPG metrosexual destroy enormous badass monsters? Unsolved mysteries, each and every one of them.



PSP. I'm hanging out for Play TV, oh so wonderfully smooth and sexy just like my new glasses. Wait, whoops again. I digress. Alright – my reason for writing was to ask if Play TV will outperform a Sony Bravia? Or will it be on par? Also I feel a severe lack of awesomeness in the PS3 games department. Bring on *MGS4*, *DMC4* and the new originals *Assassin's Creed* and *Haze*. This is all that the PS3 is missing so get off your lazy bums Sony and whip those monkeys. Churn out the titles. By no means skimp on quality just please hold the delays thanks.

Robert Nugent

Ah, those good people at OPSM, providing solid eyecare for the good people of Australia. You're not the first and you won't be the last to confuse the two Robert. As for Play TV, we don't really know what you mean. Play TV is basically a high end HDTV tuner that will connect through your PS3 allowing you to record television to your hard drive. If you're wondering if it outperforms the new Bravia's internal HD tuner, then to be honest we're not sure, but it should outperform all but the most expensive tuners at a fraction of the cost.



SHORT SIGHTED

I am writing to you to complain about my new glasses they are for long sight, not short! Yet another stuff up from you! Wait, oh crap, wrong people... ahahaha... I digress. Any way I am a loyal PlayStation fanatic with a PS2, a PS3 and also a

WON'T 'AGGLE?

After some serious saving for a PS3 since the start of the year and finally getting enough money, I couldn't find a 60GB PS3 anywhere, seeing as they're not being sold anymore and I didn't want to get a 40GB. I went to pretty much every shop within reasonable distance that might have had them. Nobody did. I was talking to this woman working at David Jones and she only managed to get hers by a fluke, finding one in their warehouse. So the last shop we tried was Dick Smith and they had one out the back with no controller or manual. We got them to bring it down to \$869 and so I finally have a FREAKIN PS3! Yes! It was probably the last 60GB PlayStation 3 on the Central Coast. Now I just hope I've got enough money for a game or two.

Bryce Carr

CUTTINGS

Delicious bite-sized letter morsels that are easy to swallow and won't ruin your dinner. They're like Milky Ways you can read...

MARK COUNSELS OUR COVER STAR DANTE...

Mark: So Dante, you've made it to the cover of the mag, congrats!

Dante: (flops floppy fringe forward, then brushes it off face) What? What did you say?! (Pulls expression like he is about to burst into tears...)

Mark: Eh? What's the problem you big cry baby? You've made it onto the cover of PlayStation mag, the greatest thing ever conceived, what's the beef big dawg?

Dante: I'M NOT ON THE COVER OF THE MAGAZINE, IT'S THAT LITTLE BITCH NERO!!! (Collapses into a disgusting emo tearfest...)

Mark: (Rubs back awkwardly) Um... there there... there there... Don't worry.

Dante: I just don't understand it, you know? One minute I was hot news – and now I've been replaced by a younger, more handsome, version of me... it hurts so bad. Maybe I could write a song about it? Ease the pain...

Mark: Oh please... for the love of all that is holy, please don't do that!

Dante: Why not? Don't you like my music?

Mark: Music? You're in the business of slaying demons, aren't you?

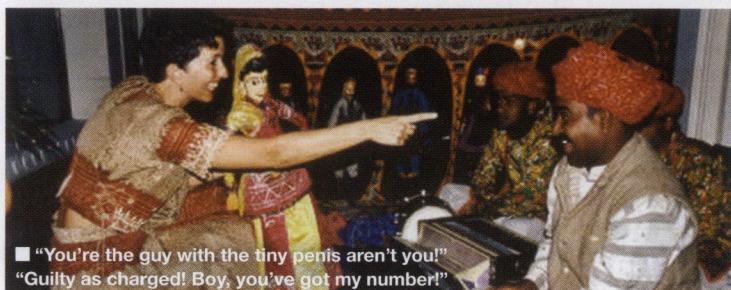
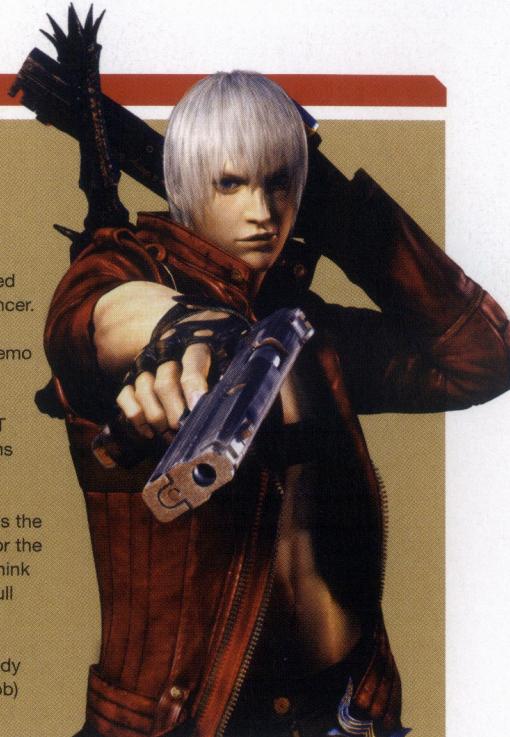
Dante: Actually, I've recently joined Fall Out Boy. I'm their back up dancer.

Mark: Fall Out Boy are bunch of emo crybabies – they suck!

Dante: Take that back! Take THAT BACK! (Starts slapping Mark's arms pathetically...)

Mark: (Slowly backing out towards the door.) Okay, Dante, um... thanks for the interview. That was, err... great! I think I've got everything I need. (Runs full pelt out the door)

Dante: Don't LEAVE ME! Everybody leaves... everybody leaves me. (Sob)



■ "You're the guy with the tiny penis aren't you!"
"Guilty as charged! Boy, you've got my number!"

Sounds like you did alright there with the price. Reminds us of that time Phill was haggling at that massage parlour down the street from the office and he got a high heeled boot to the face for his trouble. That sweet piece of hardware didn't have an instruction manual either. Yeah, maybe we should stop there, since Phill's girlfriend is reading and could legitimately kick all our arses simultaneously. Hi Trish, we love you! Thanks for the brownies!

War, Burnout and Guitar Hero.

Finally I've saved up enough money after all other commitments such as mortgage, car payments and a weekly allowance for my wife, to invest in the newest incarnation, the PlayStation 3.

Now this is where things start getting a bit negative, don't get me wrong, it's a fantastic machine and the games I have sampled thus far are second to none. My problem comes from the fact that because apparently it has taken me so long to get the funds together now I have to make do with the watered down version of the console... with no bloody backwards compatibility.

As you can imagine from my many years of gaming I have amassed a vast library of games and was looking forward to the day when I could donate my old PlayStation 2 to someone less fortunate... like my little brother, and use my new machine to not only play the new awesome PlayStation 3 games but also to revisit my old PlayStation 1 & 2 friends.

But no, because Sony needs to shift more units it had to cut costs to make the console more accessible to the greater majority, which is fine. But why am I forced to take this option, why does it not see fit to still cater for the older PlayStation gamers who still want to derive enjoyment from their old games and continue production of the 60GB console?

Regardless I'm sure this will fall on deaf ears at Sony but I have to say that I am most disappointed that I have to keep two PlayStations in front of my TV to be able to enjoy all the games I own. I personally feel let down as the backwards compatibility was a major selling point for me for both the PlayStation 2 & 3, and now as a dedicated long term PlayStation gamer I feel us, who have been through the journey are no longer valued.

I implore Sony to rethink this decision and give back to the consumers who have supported you from day dot.

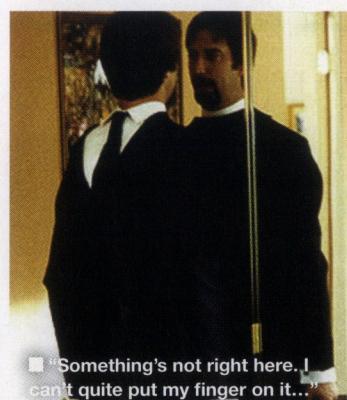
Simon, via email.

Hey Simon, the very minute we heard the news that the 40GB PS3 wouldn't be backwards compatible we anticipated this kind of perfectly fair response. We understand that those who have a significant amount of PS2 games may be cut by this decision. Sony claims to have done research (and we believe it) that shows PS3 owners very rarely play PS2 games on their PS3, and that was one of the reasons for the lack of backwards compatibility. But the simple fact is that the PS2 is still selling very well, and Sony seems keen to protect this active market. You're not alone, that's for sure.

SPEAK TO US

Love the new mag? Hate the new mag? We want your opinions and questions on OPS, on games – on anything that you feel the need to share with your fellow readers. The best letter of each issue wins the Game of the Month! Write to us on paper or on a computer at:

OPS Feedback
Derwent Howard PO Box 1037
Bondi Junction, NSW 1355
ops@derwenthoward.com.au



■ "Something's not right here. I can't quite put my finger on it..."

BACKWARDS MAN

Now, like yourselves, I am a long term gamer and have experienced many a happy moment in front of the various PlayStation incarnations. From my time marveling at the fantastic things I could do on the first machine with great games such as *Final Fantasy VII*, *Metal Gear Solid*, and *Tomb Raider* to my absolute rapture at the worlds and gameplay on the second incarnation with games such as *God of*

HARD DRIVIN'

Will Sony be releasing extra hard drives later, like memory cards? Just wondering.

Bryce Carr, via email

This is a possibility, but the PS3 supports regular external hard drives, so give that a bash. But it's possible that Sony may release its own branded hard drive – nothing official yet though.

ENDGAME

Do you know when Tom Clancy's *EndWar* is coming out?

Chris Linck, via email

Sorry Chris, we don't have a concrete date for *EndWar* as of yet, as far as we know it should be released 'early 2008'. We will have some new info on this puppy soon however. As they say in the biz: watch this space.

CROSS-EYED

Your Playstation WORD-ACROSS-O-MAJIG kicked ass.

Chris Ingram, via email

Yes. Yes it did. Despite the fact that no-one in the office could do it, not even Adam – and he designed the thing. If you ask the ginger warrior nicely he may work on a sequel. But don't call him a ginger warrior. He hates that...

DREAM COME TRUE...

Hey guys I heard there is a yellow PS3 for sale and it's twice as powerful as the normal PS3. Is that true?

Blake, via email

Yep, it's actually a gold PS3. It's made of chocolate and moonbeam smiles. When you turn it on rainbows ejaculate from your TV screen and cover you in stardust. It's also a time machine.

PS3 HOW TO...

PS3 Media Streaming - Magically link your PC and PS3 together as one!

The PS3 plays awesome games - we all know that. But in many ways the console is awash with unused potential that some owners may never utilise. This leaves us both sad and enraged, because the fact of the matter is, you don't really have to be all that tech savvy to take advantage of the PS3's unlimited multimedia potential.

And that's where we come in. We are officially complete and utter idiots of the savant variety, and we're showing you how to do stuff on your PS3: which essentially means that if we can do it, you can *totally* do it.

This time round it's Media Streaming, from your PC to your PS3. Sounds tough, doesn't it? Well we certainly thought so, because we've been delaying this one for the past couple of months due to the fact that we thought it would be too complicated, but guess what people? Turns out it's pretty damn simple.

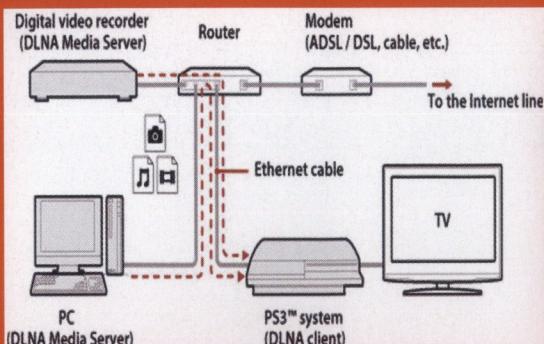
And here's how...

I GOT TROUBLES... PART 1



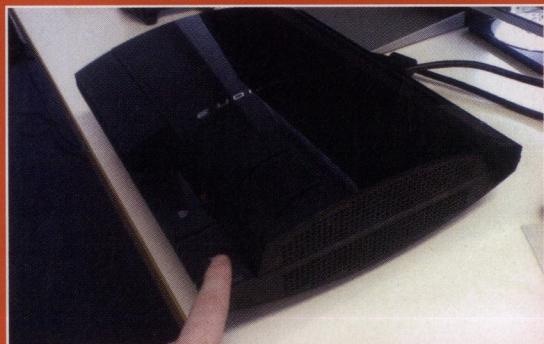
FILE FORMATS

The PS3 is extremely fussy with file formats, specifically when it comes to movies. As of now you can't play popular video files such as AVI, WMV or the high definition video file of choice, MKV - but that may change in the future. Sony has recently struck a deal with DivX, which means AVI files will most likely be compatible with the PS3, sooner rather than later. For now, though, you're going to have to stick with MP2 and MP4 files for video. Gutted...



STEP 1

Well it may seem a bit obvious, but first and foremost you're going to need a PC, and a home network set up that has your PS3 hooked up to the same router as your PC. If you have your PS3 hooked up to the internet, there's a very good chance you already have this whole thing set up - so this is a no brainer.



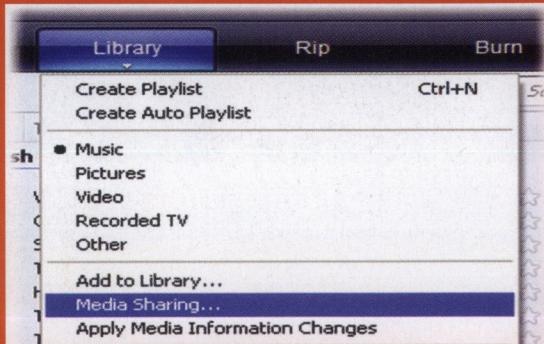
STEP 3

Okay, now turn everything on - your computer, and the PS3 - make doubly sure that everything is online and connected to the same network. Load up Windows Media Player 11 on your desktop, you'll be needing that shortly. We're almost at the part where you'll need to flex your computing muscles.



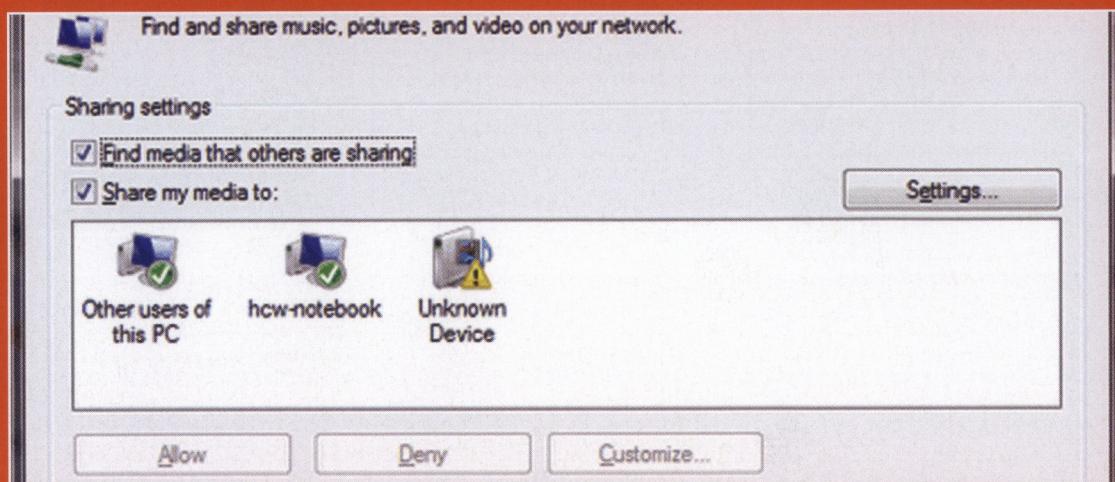
STEP 2

For this to work easily you'll also need to have Windows Media Player 11 installed on your PC, if you don't have there's no need to get your panties in a twist, just head to www.microsoft.com/windows/windowsmedia/player/11/default.aspx and download it. Then get ready to roll.



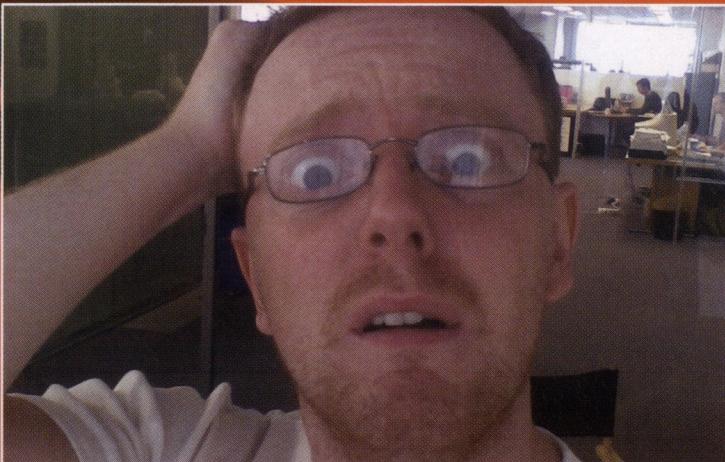
STEP 4

Okay, so the pic above pretty much shows you where you have to go. Head up to the library drop down box in the top left hand corner of Windows Media Player and scroll down to Media Sharing. This is the section that allows you to share content with other PCs. Click on it fool!



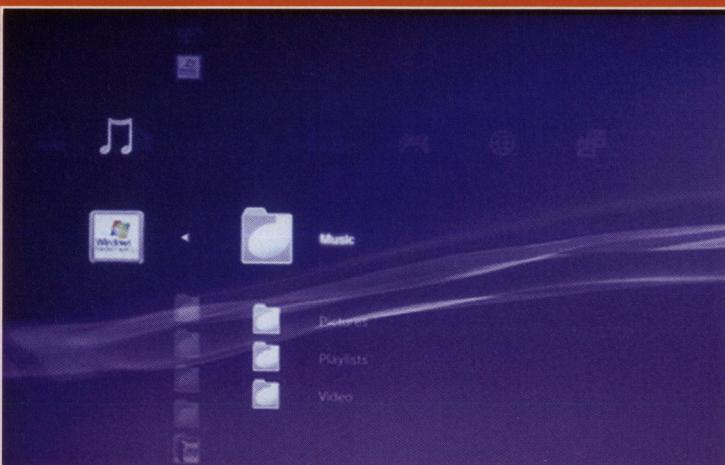
STEP 5

If your network is already connected with other computers, then you've quite probably already used this section before to share files across the network. If your PS3 is connected to the network, it will be there under 'unknown device', since Microsoft *really* want you to own an Xbox 360 instead. Laugh at them as you choose to share content to the PS3 by ticking the boxes as above.



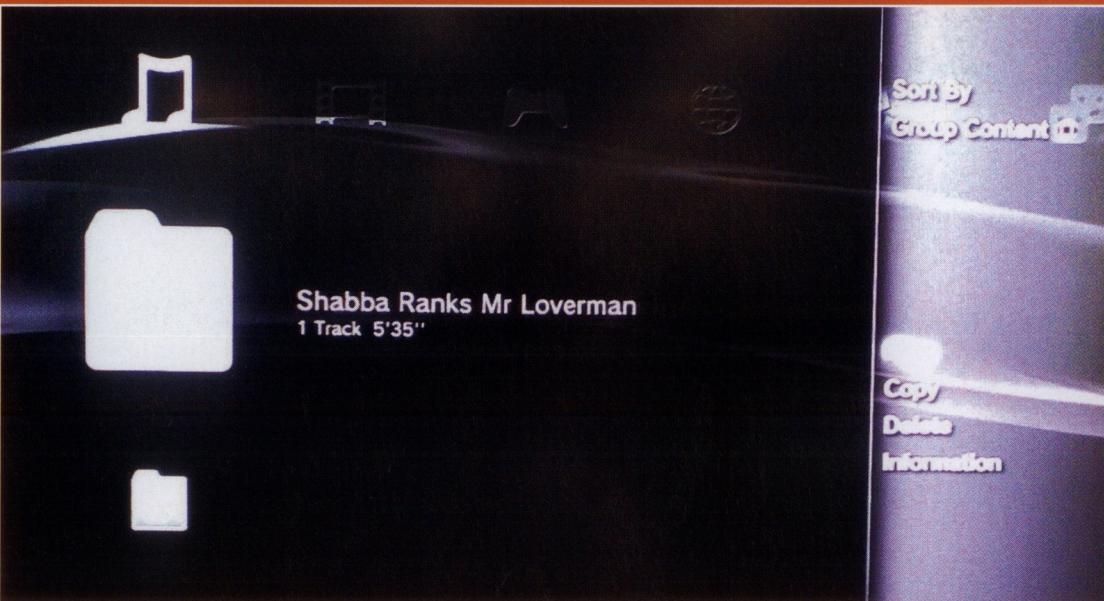
STEP 6

Oh no! You're having problems? Here's a little bit of troubleshooting: if you don't see the 'unknown device' icon, it's possible your network has some sort of firewall. Check with whoever set up the network. You may also have some difficulties if you don't have Vista, but it should be okay with XP. Man, Mark really needs to shave...



STEP 8

Your entire Windows Media Player library should now be available for streaming on your PS3. Have a scroll through all the goods – from photographs and music to video, it's all there and at your disposal. Simply click on whatever file you want to watch or listen to and voila! It will be done! Even your playlists should be available.



STEP 10

Oh, and one more thing, instead of streaming the files, you can actually copy them directly across to the PS3 hard drive, saving you the hassle of leaving both machines on in order to access the media. Simply press **A** when the file is highlighted, transfer them to your hard drive. Now you can have a spare copy of the Shabba Ranks classic, Mr. Loverman.



STEP 7

All right, now it's the PS3's time to shine, baby. Now that you've allowed sharing with Sony's multimedia badboy, head towards the 'search for media servers' icon. You can find this beneath the music, video and photo tabs. Click on this icon, and hopefully this thing will work properly...



STEP 9

Just remember that you can only stream files that are in your Windows Media Player Library. If you are not a big user of this programme then it's possible that you have very few files in the library. Transferring them is simple, you can do a search via WMP and add them that way, or simply transfer them manually.

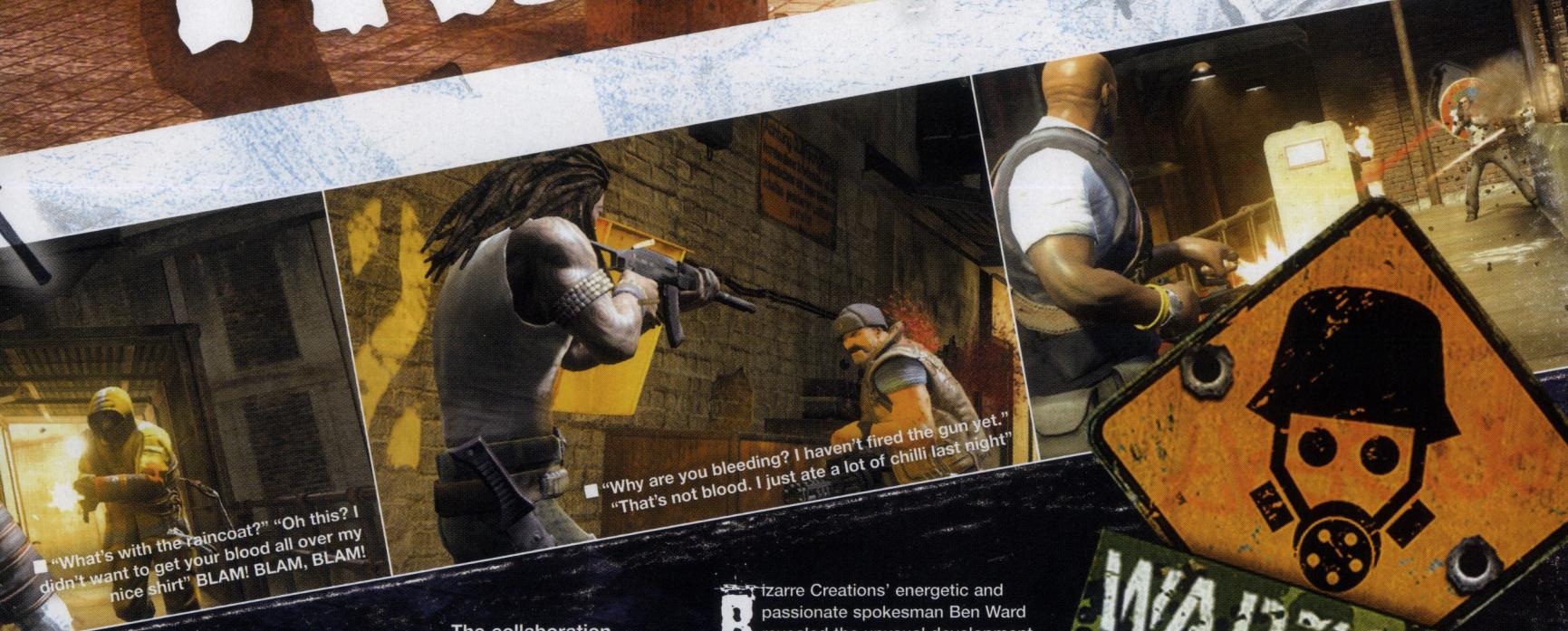
I GOT TROUBLES... PART 2

PORNOGRAPHY
Getting caught watching pornography by your girlfriend/mum/wife is a tricky situation, and we've all been there (haven't we?) Our advice is to shuffle backwards away from the controller in an extremely awkward manner, before running into the toilet, locking the door, and screaming, "Lalalalala, I can't hear you" as your girlfriend/wife/mum chastises you from the other side of the door.



JOIN THE CLUB

WORDS: NARAYAN PATTISON



The collaboration between Sega and Bizarre Creations is just that – bizarre. Nobody would have picked

Sega and *Project Gotham Racing* creator Bizarre as the likely candidates to shake up the third-person shooter genre with their new game, *The Club*. Rather than building a regular shooter Bizarre used its experience with racing games as its inspiration to create a new breed of game – a shooter that focuses on practising the perfect run through a level to best maintain your combo and beat your last high score.

The main scoring mechanic of *The Club* is its combo multiplier. You get an addition to your score multiplier for every person you kill. Dispatch someone with a boring handful of bullets to the chest and you could score as little as 2,000 points for the kill. Put some real skill into it and terminate them with a "Headshot" (6,000), or better yet a "Ricochet" bullet (10,000) or use the "Last Bullet" in your clip (15,000) with a 20 times combo multiplier and you're really smoking. FYI – pulling off all three of those special moves at once with a 20 multiplier would net a ridiculous 620,000 compared to the bog standard 2,000 points for an amateur kill.

Glance at *The Club* in passing and it would be easy to dismiss because it lacks the explosive eye candy of some recent blockbusters but delve into the gameplay and you'll find a superbly polished potential classic. It looks like a new king of pass-the-controller high score rivalry has arrived.

Bizarre Creations' energetic and passionate spokesman Ben Ward revealed the unusual development process behind *The Club*.

OPS: You mentioned comparisons with *Street Fighter* but it seems like there's a really obvious inspiration from the *Resident Evil 4* Mercenaries mode. Was that a starting point?

BW: I've never even played it but I've heard that comment before. It wasn't the starting point at all, to be honest none of these games were starting points. Really, if anything it was taking *Project Gotham Racing* and then saying, "Right, we're going to make a shooter now. How can we turn this PGR thing into a shooter?" That was where the project really began and that was Martin, our creative director, he basically just came up with that concept and let the team go in and work on it for a bit and that led to the prototype and led to all the other bits as well. So saying it's like a *Doom* or *Tony Hawk's* is just an easy way to describe it but I don't think it's necessarily true. It just evolved that way. We kind of work on that design. We don't really look sideways at other people. We just know exactly what we want to make and that's what we're going to do, you know? With *The Club* we knew

what we wanted to make three years ago and it's taken three years to get everything put together to make it.

OPS: *The Club's* got an old school focus on gameplay – practise and precision and all that. Do you think videogames today have become too focused on graphics and have kind of lost their touch with gameplay?

BW: Yeah they've certainly focused on too much something haven't they? Our design people are really famous for saying we designed *The Club* because we didn't want to play through a 20-hour epic storyline. We don't have time to do that anymore. We've all got kids and stuff and can only play for like five minutes at a time. So that's why a lot of *The Club* was born in our design team's mind because they didn't have the time to play



anything else and a lot of the old school stuff comes from that – about the length of the time you're meant to be playing the game. With *The Club*, you can just dip in and out and you haven't missed any storyline, you haven't missed any vital gameplay mechanics.

OPS: *The Club* looks like the kind of game that would be played a lot in the office by the developers. How has your own play-testing shaped the development of the game?

BW: We've got an in-house test team at the office, which is quite unusual with developers, especially medium-sized developers like us. We have these bouncer testers which we hire from friends of friends and people from forums as well, testers who are just like really good at the game. We had seven or eight bouncers there for a number of months and they just did nothing but set scores and play the game.

OPS: You stressed that the storyline was minimal. Is there any sort of

resolution to this story?

BW: Well it depends which character you play. Each character has their own personal culmination of their fight in the tournament. So off the top of my head, Dragov is the guy who you see at the start who is getting captured by the helicopter and the idea is that he's this Russian criminal who's escaped from this prison and run across Siberia, as you do, and there's this helicopter chasing him and it captures him and forces him to compete in *The Club*. When he finally wins the tournament, you see him in this military base style place and he's making his escape and he shoots a few guys, jumps on a different helicopter and sort of goes off into the night and you think, "Did he escape or did he just beat the living shit out of these people in the helicopters?" It's an ending suited to his character and it leaves it open for various other sequels and different characters.

OPS: Designing a level for a combo-based shooter compared to a traditional shooter must have involved very different strategies.

BW: It was the exact opposite, I think,

of what I imagine most FPS teams do. They'd have the storyline written out and sorted, then they'd craft out environments, then they'd concept art it, then it gets given to an environment team and they build it and then I guess they'd give it to a gameplay team to make sure that you could work through the levels and it was fun.

We didn't really do that, we had these cool ideas for environments. We were like "well one needs to be an environment with lots of gantries with stuff overhanging and a steel mill. So we went and researched a steel mill, we built the whole area then we thought, "Oh this is cool around here, this would be a good group and this would be another good lap around here" and stuff like that and we just situated on that with the gameplay team again. We started with an environment and a gameplay idea and then we built everything else into that.

For instance we didn't say, "Oh this is some important story, this needs to be here, this needs to happen here. So I think it's a different process and it's one that we've brought from racing games. It's exactly the same way we built a city in *Gotham*; we built a city, we researched it, we built it, then we implemented the tracks and made sure that it converts.

It's turned out pretty good I think and the work process has been good as well.

OPS: How about your acquisition by Activision, what does that mean for Bizarre Creations?

BW: I won't go into too much detail. Basically for us it's absolutely brilliant. From my point of view personally I've got a lot more freedom than I did before and that's really good. Before if I had to write an article or do a movie or something like that I had to send it off to a hundred different places to get it approved whereas that's not the case now as I'm part of the team and I can be trusted. It's the same with all of our teams across the board now, so we don't have to come back and deal with the shit you had to put up with being an independent.

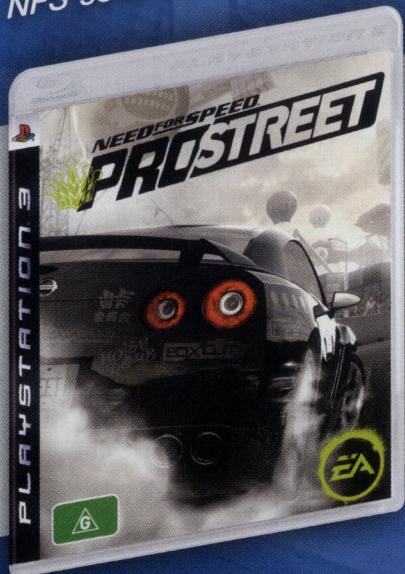
We are the number one team in terms of racing. So in that regard it's brilliant, financially and business wise. It's sort of different from say an EA acquisition because they tend to take struggling developers and they sort of absorb them into the collective but Activision aren't like that. They like the developer to go forward. Obviously, we were successful already and they just wanted to take their trim off the top basically, and we just carried on exactly how we worked. So, no redundancies, no changes at all really. We're all happy. ▲



STREET SWEEPER

Still gagging for a copy of *Need for Speed ProStreet*? Did Santa forget to stuff one in your stocking in a drunken egg-nog haze? You needn't worry for where the fat man has failed we can deliver. Thanks to EA we've got another 10 copies of the *NFS* series reboot up for

grabs and available for 10 eagle-eyed readers. What do you need to do to win one? Scour the magazine for the five hidden *ProStreet* cars (pictured below) and tell us what pages you found them on for a chance to nab a copy of the game. Mark your entries 'ProStreet giveaway' and follow the entry instructions on page 20.



FIND THESE CARS & WIN!

MISSED OUT?

Missed out on grabbing both our *Need for Speed ProStreet* collector covers last issue? Fear not, and dry those tears! The missing link in your personal library is a mere phonecall away. Past issues of *Official PlayStation Magazine* don't just live on in barbershops and medical centre waiting rooms, you know – they're available to send directly to your door. Call now, while stocks last!

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DANCIN' WITH

WORDS: ADAM MATHEW



■ After getting his ass handed to him for the umpteenth time by Godzilla, Mothra was pissed



■ "Hi scary dinosaur... bye scary dinosaur!"

Don't get us wrong, we're not weird superstitious freaks in any way, shape, or form (though we won't say "bloody Mary" into a mirror 13 times at midnight, discreetly avoid all black cats by field goaling them into the neighbour's yard and ritually pray to Superman every night to deliver us from Zod). But, as a general guideline, we do try to avoid calling the supposed source of all evil a whiny girl – what with hexes being so genital herpes-based nowadays. But if there is some hidden misfortune or imminent curse to be copped from smack talking the devil it must have a seriously delayed reaction

because the stellar *Devil May Cry* series has steadily gone from strength to strength regardless.

And when we mean strength to strength we're of course deliberately ignoring the second game entirely – which was rancid at best. But thankfully game number three, and its apologetic special edition, fixed that mistake by returning the series to its former glory – much to our relief. However, with the latest installment, *Devil May Cry 4*, making the big transition to next gen, and featuring a new playable character that will cut in on our Dante quality time; we're understandably anxious to

see whether this fourth iteration will continue the quality standard set by *DMC3* – or if there is indeed a curse upon the series that makes all the odd numbered ones brilliant and the even numbered ones shite.

ATTENDING THE LOCAL CHURCH SERVICE - DANTE STYLE

Our *DMC4* demonstration opened like all good introductions should: beautiful scenery, a surprise twist, an epic boss fight, and one heinously good arse kicking – the arse, unfortunately, being ours. Things started inside a stunningly rendered cathedral where our new

protagonist, Nero, sits listening to a female friend sing some opera during an elite "Holy Knights" ceremony. When she finishes up the inevitable sermon begins and, before our ADD attention span can take hold, Dante explodes dramatically through the stained glass ceiling with his hand cannon, theatrically lands in front of the nice old geezer giving the sermon and punctuates the last sentence by turning his head into a canoe.

Chaos quickly erupts and Dante effortlessly humiliates and slaughters most of his attackers, which is just his usual standard procedure. Before

THE DEVIL

Satan might be a crybaby; truly one of the oddest game name choices in recent memory, and a statement that's just begging for a retaliatory kick in the balls from the dude downstairs in the red pyjamas with the pitchfork.



■ "Quit sticking your tongue out, I told you, It grosses me out!"

■ "Argh! I'm falling! Stupid gravity..."

we're offered an explanation as to why the hell Dante would deliberately cap his fellow demon hunting allies, Nero promptly steps up to the plate and the witty banter, pithy comebacks, and penis-compensating swords come out as the two begin to size each other up – in a purely metaphorical sense. What follows is a cut-scene that would make the legendary John Woo sit up and orgasm – slow motion near-miss sword cuts, cameras tracking bullets, and religious statues being perforated and decapitated in the name of wholesome violence – all the good stuff. After this stylish, high wire flying, gravity-can-

bugger-off, cinematic has finished doing its thing, we're handed control of Nero.

Initially Nero plays quite similar to Dante; he has a ranged gun attack, slashing four hit sword combos, a lock-on, a double jump, and an evasion roll. However he soon surprises us, and Dante, by unleashing a unique "Devil Bringer" arm that basically imbues his right hand with a ghostly outer glow that effectively doubles its power and size. But despite us using this fancy Devil Bringer uppercut maneuver, and much to the amusement of assembled onlookers, Dante handed us our arses – twice. Eventually we adjusted to Nero's

strengths and swiftly served Dante with a double-booted side kick to the face and a complimentary impaling to a wall for his impudence. This apparently didn't faze old Dante much, because he promptly un-impaled himself with ease, said something witty (possibly about our mums) and casually somersaulted away – smug, semi-invincible, silver fox bastard that he is.

DEVIL MAAAAAAAN, DEVIL MAAAAAAAN

With the scene set, and the mission objective centered on either unraveling the truth of Dante's insurrection,

or dealing him some much-needed comeuppance; we eagerly pressed on into the next level. After watching a brief cut-scene that detailed a defenceless villager, freaky demon free-for-all; we were finally offered a chance to stretch our legs and explore things. The level in question was set outside the church in a European medieval-esque town square; a setting that immediately reminded us of the beautiful visuals displayed in DMC4's closest rival *Ninja Gaiden* – which is a flattering comparison to be sure. Like that particular title *DMC4* is a champagne graphical event with exquisite details

in the architecture, combat maneuvers and animations to die for – quite often literally, and a blistering frame rate that moves things along at a solid 60 frames per second.

While we engaged the village mauling demons, which are best described as maniacal "stitchlings" with scythes for feet, our friendly Activision rep explained some of Nero's cooler abilities. The first is an upgrade for the Devil Bringer arm that enables Nero to launch it out like a frog's tongue, latch onto an enemy, and make it "get over here" for an up-close-and-personal pasting. This technique is used in a variety of different ways, either to pull demons toward you or to flail them around and launch them back at their degenerate mates. Also, you can use the Devil Bringer in a juggle combo that

has you launching up in the air then brutally slamming them down on the deck with Nero yelling "slam dunk!" – just to add insult to serious injury.

The second upgrade was for Nero's signature sword 'Red Queen', which has a clutch on its handle. Yeah, you read that right; it has a clutch – because people who drive automatic swords are little bitches. At any time during the action you can tap **□** to get Nero to reach over his shoulder and rev up his sword. There's a three-tiered meter located in the top left of the screen that indicates the level of charge, or you can just look at the beast and watch it incrementally glow with its own power. Once you've superheated your sword it'll carve through demons like butter; but the effect is short lived and you'll have to 'rev 'er up' again after landing a

few hits – which makes for an intriguing balancing act when you're surrounded by the multitudes in combat.

DROP THE SWORD CLUTCH AND CUT SICK WITH A BURNOUT, BRO

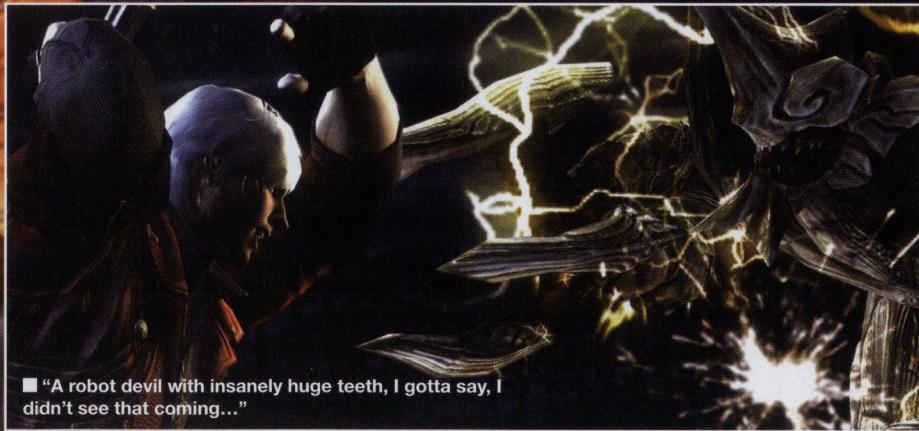
For the uninitiated; this balancing act during combat is just a continuation of the series' signature 'stylish play'. Both Nero and Dante have a touch of theatrical flair when it comes to busting demonic chops and you're ranked by the varying techniques you use, the speed in which you disembowel your foes, and whether or not you're scratched while you dish out the death. Combined with how many orbs you collect from your victims, and the overall time taken, you'll earn yourself Devil Hunter Ranks from D (utterly crap) right up through to A, S and the SSS

(ludicrously un-crap). This formula is what makes the *DMC* games great, because you'll treat every enemy as an opportunity to milk out better combos and every boss battle has the added challenge of efficiency as opposed to merely surviving the thing.

Speaking of challenging bosses and hoping to survive; on the next level that was showcased we stood toe to claw with the epic behemoth that is Berial. Emerging in the middle of a desert ghost town, Berial is a flaming, four legged, two armed cacophony of fury with a sword three times the size of Nero – and in an act of bravery/immense stupidity Nero decides to pick a fight with it. All hell breaks loose, and we're treated to a symphony of destruction with gouts of flame licking around us and utterly decimating the whole town.

RESIDENT DE-VIL

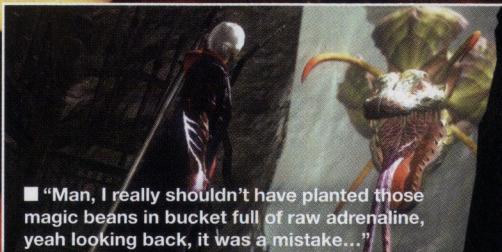
Back in '98, after the success of *Resident Evil 2*, Capcom charged Hideki Kamiya with conceptualizing the next installment of the series. Code named "Team Little Devil" Hideki even made a research trip to study Spanish castles in Europe for the level designs of the new project. When his prototype engine was unveiled to the Capcom bigwigs it was deemed too radical a departure from the existing style of gameplay – thus the premise changed and a new Devil was born...



■ "A robot devil with insanely huge teeth, I gotta say, I didn't see that coming..."



■ Fire: if you totally have to destroy everything and burn it to the ground, you can't go wrong with fire...



■ "Man, I really shouldn't have planted those magic beans in bucket full of raw adrenaline, yeah looking back, it was a mistake..."

It truly shows how awe-inspiring *DMC4*'s graphical engine can be.

And when that miniature armageddon wrapped itself up with a satisfying but unfinished result, the level continued to impress us with dark, moody castle/manor areas that easily one-upped the claustrophobic masterpieces seen in Capcom's other stellar series *Resident Evil*.

Inside this haunted castle we were exposed to some light puzzle elements and unique "moving grappling point" challenges that showed us that the Devil Bringer arm can be just as stretchy and versatile outside of combat too. While it's fun to use the devil bringer to swing from point to point, it has to be said that there was an incident during a puzzle section that punished us by dropping Nero into a

pit to re-fight enemies if we mistimed a difficult grapple shot – which got old pretty damn quickly.

WHAT'S THE STORY MORNING GLORIA?

Man, those edgy/perverted Japanese costume designers have outdone themselves this time; because the next level introduced us to a new character called Gloria and she fulfills the titillation factor of the game – sorry ladies, but they always sneak one in there, sometimes four.

While we won't bore you with inaccurate predictions as to her role in the plot, we can safely reveal two facts relating to her; firstly, she punishes demons with extreme prejudice while wearing an outfit that would make a Vegas stripper blush – secondly,

whoever controls the camera during her cut-scenes has a serious up-skirt/ down top fetish happening, which is made even crazier because she's borderline 'going commando'.

Another interesting highlight in this last level was a chance to reacquaint ourselves with Dante, who seems to be doing just fine after his recent impaling. Despite looking fantastic with twice the detail he had on PS2, Dante is pretty much the same with all his familiar combos, weaponry, stances and attitude returning mostly untouched. So all you rabid fans can officially stop stressing, the king is back and he is as much of a bad arse as ever. Though he mightn't have a nifty extendable devil arm like Nero; he makes up for it with his sawed-off shotgun and the attractive

ability to mutate into a mighty demon powerhouse on occasion, which is a pretty sweet trade-off if you ask us.

DANTE'S INFERO

As it stands, *DMC4* includes all the ingredients required for an epic action game; the visuals are right up there with *Ninja Gaiden Sigma*, the controls are tighter than the old guy who hunts for shop-a-dockets in the bin near your local Woolies, and the puzzles sections mix things up nicely – even though they're designed by a closet sadist. Fans of the series should plan a return pilgrimage, and *DMC* newbies should watch this game too. Because after thrashing our *DMC4* sample code, we'd say that this game is screaming down the highway to hell – in a totally sweet, AC/DC kind of way. ▀



MADNESS? MY... DAD'S... SPARDAAAAAA!

For the uninitiated; Dante is basically a mercenary committed to demon hunting, a mission of vengeance spurned by the murder of his mother and the corruption of his brother Vergil. Dante is the son of Sparda, a demon of immense power that turned against the demon emperor Mundus and decimated his forces. Due to the demon blood coursing through his veins Dante possesses various superhuman abilities which he uses along with his sword and firearms to vanquish his enemies.



■ This guy looks like the giant dog from *The Never-ending Story* – on crack. A whole load of crack



■ We think we speak for everyone when we say: what... the... hell...?



■ "Let's shake on it. You do have arms don't you?"

EXCLUSIVE looks at the very best

PREVIEWS

PS3 PS2 PSP

■ GENRE: FIRST-PERSON SHOOTER
■ PLAYERS: 1 (TBC MULTI)
■ RELEASE: EARLY 2008
■ DISTRIBUTOR: SEGA
■ DEVELOPER: MONOLITH
■ WEB: www.sega.com

INFO BYTE

The original *Condemned* featured a nasty taser that could stun enemies while you pinched their weapon. It wasn't available in the early version of the sequel we played but we've been assured it will return.

■ A simple game of fetch turned nasty when Lassie cottoned onto the fact John was only pretending to throw the ball...

CONDEMNED 2: BLOODSHOT

Sega pulls back the curtain on the sequel to the scariest game ever!

We'll kick off with a quick refresher on the original *Condemned* for those who haven't played it – which is probably most of you, seeing as it was an Xbox 360 game. Other than the format it was released on *Condemned* got a whole lot right. Best described as a survival horror first-person shooter, *Condemned* kept you in a state of constant panic by confining you to claustrophobic locals (usually decrepit apartment buildings) and gave you next to no weapons to use against the scores of resident crack heads trying to kill you.

After being framed for a crime he didn't commit in the first game, *Condemned 2* sees former Serial Crimes Unit investigator Ethan Thomas hit rock bottom. He's become a worthless drunk but is dragged back from the brink of disaster and reinstated on the force to help track down his missing partner.

Monolith's Frank Cooke explained the team's motivation behind Ethan's new direction, "Well, in the first game [Ethan] was primarily a victim. He didn't understand what's going on around him and he played that victim role which

worked well for us to introduce the feared environment. For the second game, we didn't want to have our hero to begin being a victim. You can take a hero in all different kinds of directions but we wanted to make sure that this time around, he's a little bit darker; he's a little bit stronger, a little bit more in control of what's going on around him."

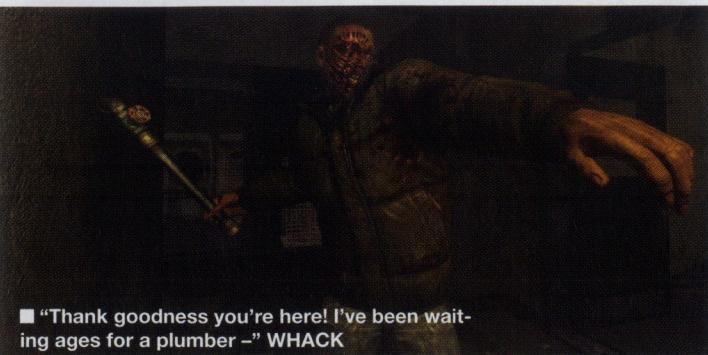
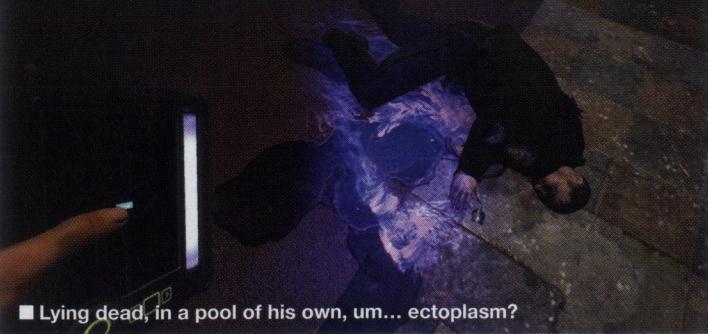
TEAM PLAYER

What this new character direction means for the gameplay is that Ethan is no longer constantly forced to be the Lone

Ranger. On some missions he'll explore buildings as part of a large team of heavily armed SWAT officers. Naturally having teammates by your side makes the atmosphere less freaky but it does give the developer a chance to change the pace and throw a greater number of tougher enemies against you.

Ethan can also patch into the crime lab via his phone to get assistance with his on-site CSI work. To help move the story forward Ethan will often need to examine a dead body for clues. He can use a range of equipment to gather





fingerprints and blood samples, then transmit the data back to the crime lab via his high tech phone for analysis. Ethan will also be responsible for examining wounds to determine which weapon was used in the murder, as well as using other clues like blood pools to provide hints about whether the body has been moved.

MAKE WITH THE KILLING

All right, all right. We know you didn't sign up to be a lab monkey. Don't worry, you'll get to exercise your itchy trigger, and clubbing, fingers in plenty of gory new combat. Rooke explains a little about how the melee system has evolved in *Condemned 2*, "[Ethan] was all about holding a weapon in his hand and basically this is all it was, it had that one swing. Now, you can use both hands, you can use your fists, you can throw weapons and you can have access to various types of swings to serve different purposes in your combat and in your strategy. You can start combining these things together into huge combos that will start building into another tier of our combat, which we call 'chain attacks'."

Why would you bother with melee attacks when you can just shoot the bastards? For a couple of reasons, actually. For one, it's disturbingly satisfying to rip pipes and planks of wood (with nails poking out) off nearby walls and use them to beat your enemies to bloody pulps. The other reason melee combat gets a big look in is that ammo is so scarce that being able to actually fire your guns is a rare, and lethal, treat.

You might have noticed that in most FPS titles the AI has been programmed to absorb nine bullets with no reaction at all, then promptly drop dead when the tenth bullet hits. We haven't shot a lot of people in real life but we're still pretty sure that getting shot even once would be a big deal. So it's impressive to see *Condemned 2* handling firearms a lot more realistically. One or two bullets from any weapon will see enemies collapse into a screaming lump of uselessness. At which point you can easily walk up, reverse the grip on your pistol or shotgun and beat the life out of them with the blunt end. Harsh... but fair.

With *Silent Hill V* and *Resident Evil*

5 both lurching into late 2008 territory (and that's at the earliest) *Condemned 2* will have the 'scare the crap out of you' market cornered when it releases in early 2008. Expect us to bash out the review verdict on this sick puppy very soon.

■ Narayan Pattison

WHAT THEY SAY:

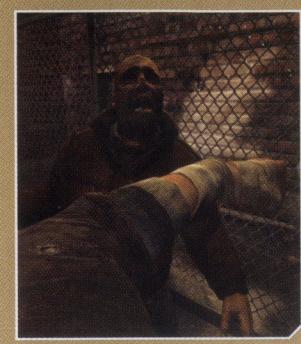
■ "...a superb mature gaming experience that will constantly surprise its players and keep them gripped from start to finish."

WHAT WE SAY:

■ We've never played such a genuinely unsettling game. Keep a beady eye out for this one.

FIGHT CLUB

In a smart bid to increase *Condemned 2*'s longevity, Monolith has packed in a handful of new bonus modes and multiplayer options. *Fight Club* sees the player being thrown into small arenas where they have to master specific challenges like 'kill 10 punks with a baseball bat in under two minutes'. Speaking of *Fight Club*, keep an eye out next month for our exclusive *Devil May Cry 4* giveaway where, along with copies of the game, you'll also be able to win cool red leather jackets like the one Brad Pitt wore in the famous David Fincher flick.



PS3 PS2 PSP PREVIEW

■ GENRE: ACTION
■ PLAYERS: 1- TBA
■ RELEASE: TBA 2008
■ DISTRIBUTOR: ACTIVISION
■ DEVELOPER: GRIN
■ WEB: www.activision.com



INFO BYTE

Bionic Commando can't possibly be as good as the movie *Commando*, starring Arnold Schwarzenegger, as it was the greatest piece of art ever conceived. So there.

■ We will now attempt to use 'arm' puns in every single one of these captions. And why not? It's 'armless fun'...



BIONIC COMMANDO

Badd to the bone...

Remakes are a tricky business, just ask Hollywood: for every *Ocean's Eleven*, there are a hundred *Bewitcheds* – rancid cesspools of mediocrity, quick cash-ins of a license only the most rabid of fans could enjoy.

You have two very distinct types of fans to cater for with remakes. Let's look at the extremes. First you have the younglings, the people who have neither seen or heard of the original game/movie/TV show. You have to cater to this crowd to an extent, by either dumbing down the new content, or indulgently explaining it in a horrendously patronising manner.

Then you have the fanboys: irritating, possibly overweight, completely willing to run their mouths ad infinitum regarding the sacred original, ready to slit the throats of any who beg to differ, and an anthrax-filled envelope addressed to any director who dares deviate from the original masterpiece.

INTRODUCING...

And now, into this ominous minefield steps *Bionic Commando*, a game that

seeks to do justice to the classic *BC*, originally released on the NES over 20 years ago. This game centred around, you guessed it, a technically enhanced arm that could do a bunch of cool stuff (and by that we mean swinging around and awesome crap like that).

Some things have changed obviously. This time around you play as Nathan Spencer who, much like the entire A-Team, is a soldier who was imprisoned for a crime he didn't commit. He also happens to have a huge mechanical monstrosity for an arm. Good times.

Spencer is scheduled for execution, but just before the deed is done an explosive weapon detonates, leaving the city in tatters, and everyone defenceless in the face of their enemies.

So instead of killing Nathan, the powers that be decide to reactivate him and set him loose against the terrorists that attempted to destroy the city. Yep, we're killing those pesky terrorists again.

AND HOW WILL WE BE KILLING?

about his badass arm for the last couple of paragraphs? Yes, Nathan Spencer will be killing dudes via his Bionic Arm. This arm, however, is mostly to be used for swinging (not the wife swapping kind, the actual physical act of swinging kind). This is a theme that was prevalent in the two-dimensional NES original, and looks set to play a huge role in this remake.

Capcom has promised that *Bionic Commando* will be set in an open-world environment, which gives us hope that Spencer's Bionic Arm will be used in order to scale huge buildings in an *Assassin's Creed*-like manner.

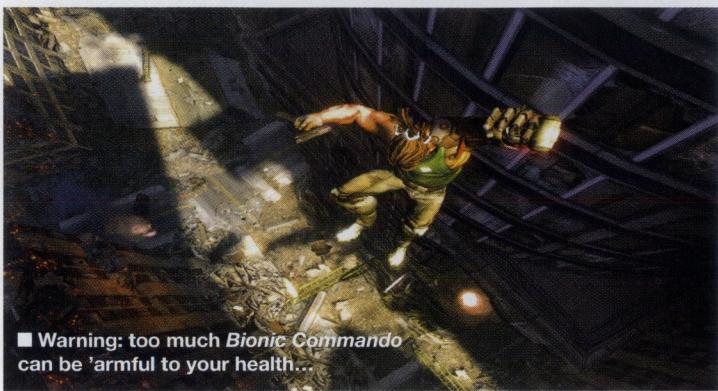
With the whole swinging mechanism appearing to take centre stage, it would make sense that the game would have a huge emphasis on travel across the Y-axis, if you know what we mean.

Nathan Spencer will also be able to

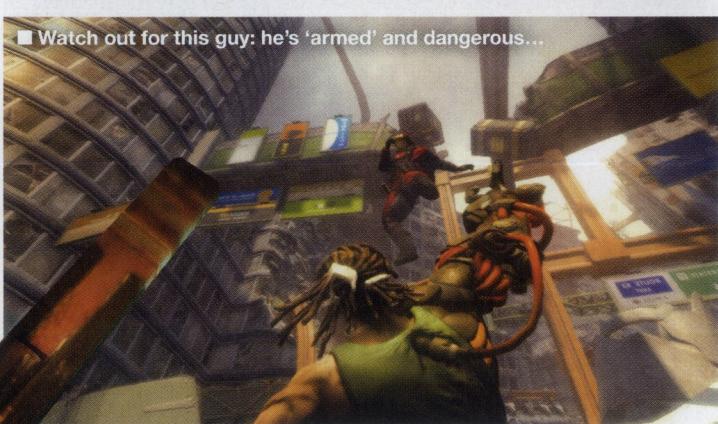




■ "I think I've got intimacy issues. I always keep my boyfriends at arm's length"



■ Warning: too much *Bionic Commando* can be 'armful to your health...



■ Watch out for this guy: he's 'armed' and dangerous...



target and shoot enemies from a whole variety of different angles and perspectives. You can fire off a weapon when climbing, swinging between buildings, and even hanging upside down. We're hoping these abilities will translate into furious mid-air gun battles of the spectacular and adrenaline-inducing variety, but as of now it's all pure speculation.

There have also been some hints that the Bionic Arm will be upgradeable, and that there are some new uses that haven't

"We're hoping these abilities will translate into furious mid air gun battles of the spectacular and adrenaline inducing variety."

been announced yet. We look forward to mastering what could turn out to be an innovative, and ultimately fun game mechanic. Here's hoping that Capcom exploit it to the fullest.

MIGHTY 'PURTY'

It also pays to mention the fact that *Bionic Commando*'s environments are looking especially 'perty', and look set to tie in with the whole 'swinging around' theme that seems to be prevalent at this early stage. We certainly hope so.

The art design is blatantly sculpted around the fact that the city has been completely blown to smithereens, with roads and building laid to waste. Although this seems like a minor detail, it actually sets the game apart from others, such as *GTA*, *Spider-Man 3*, and the upcoming *Prototype*, all of which are sandbox games set in a city environment.

Again it's all speculation, but we also hope that this broken, destroyed environment will aid and abet the different ways in which you can use the Bionic Arm, with more broken edges and



■ "Relax... I mean you no 'arm"

NAZIS? WE HATE THESE GUYS!

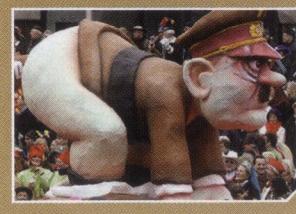
Strangely enough the original arcade version of *Bionic Commando* (released in 1987) had players facing off against those dastardly Nazis, despite the fact that the game was actually set in the future. The final boss was actually Adolf Hitler, as resurrected by a mad scientist. The NES version, however, was changed entirely and had you facing off against the 'Baddies' instead...

WHAT THEY SAY:

■ "...harnesses the power of the latest generation of hardware to fully exploit the swing mechanic."

WHAT WE SAY:

■ Can we fit in one more 'swinging' double entendre? Regardless, this remake is heading in the right direction.



PS3 PS2 PSP PREVIEW

■ GENRE: ACTION
■ PLAYERS: 1 (TBA)
■ RELEASE: LATE 2008
■ DISTRIBUTOR: VIVENDI
■ DEVELOPER: TERMINAL REALITY
■ WEB: www.vivendi.com



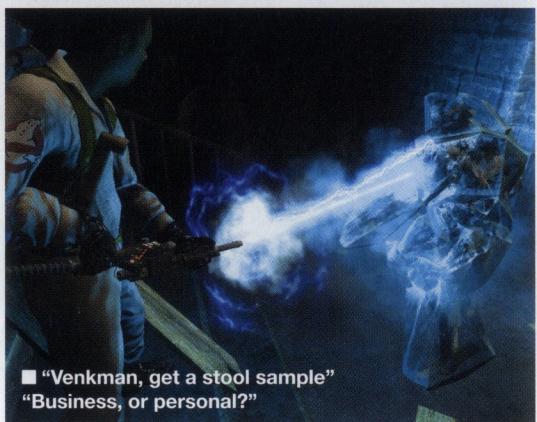
■ "We came, we saw, we kicked its ass"

■ "We've been going about this all wrong, this Mr. Stay Puff's okay, he's a sailor, he's in New York, we get this guy laid we won't have any trouble!"



INFO BYTE

The *Ghostbusters* script was actually written with Saturday Night alumni Eddie Murphy, John Belushi and John Candy in mind. But scheduling difficulties (and in Belushi's case, death) proved problematic and prevented this dream line up from becoming a reality.



■ "Venkman, get a stool sample"
"Business, or personal?"

HOSTBUSTERS: THE GAME

Who you gonna call?

If you happen to be in your mid 20s the influence of *Ghostbusters* in your life is pretty much undeniable. You probably tried (and failed) to act as cool as Peter Venkman, you almost definitely had a geeky mate who was nicknamed Egon, and you sure as hell were simultaneously entertained and terrified of a certain green ghost called Slimer.

You possibly also pooped in your pants at the thought of that creepy painting of Vigo, and flicked your sloppy boogers at your brother before saying 'you got slimed'. Um, yeah... okay, maybe that was just us.

Hopping on that nostalgia ghost train and riding it for all it's worth comes *Ghostbusters: The Game*. Set immediately after the events of the second movie, you play as a new recruit to the *Ghostbusters* team, helping Ray, Egon, Peter, Janine and the gang bust some ghosts.

In the aftermath of the events that occurred in *Ghostbusters 2*, New York has gone crazy for those bumbling pseudo scientists, and the team is expanding, hence your inclusion to the growing team.

But surprisingly *Ghostbusters: The Game* hasn't degenerated into the kind of half-assed, clumsily designed sandbox nonsense you might have expected from the license. Developer Terminal Reality has specifically gone down the cinematic route, which has demanded a more guided experience, as opposed to a watered down non-linear game.

And while some players may have preferred the free-roaming approach, we believe that this pivotal design decision may result in a more focused, high-end piece of software, allowing the team to create a game with better production values all round.

The weapons promise to be one of *Ghostbusters'* undoubted trump cards. The Proton packs, of course, make an appearance (don't cross the streams!) but Terminal Reality has also promised to expand the *Ghostbusters'* arsenal, helping players prove once and for all that they ain't afraid of no ghost.

It all sounds pretty impressive, and this is compounded by the fact that the original cast are returning for voice over duties: even the inimitable Bill Murray has

signed on. Add this to the fact that Harold Ramis and Dan Aykroyd have taken on writing duties and you have what really ought to be a sure fire hit. Even if the game doesn't play that well, it's sure to be frickin' hilarious.

Fortunately, however, the game also looks set to play brilliantly. Can all of our wishes come true at once? The developers say they can, and we sorta almost believe them. Combining the writing and voice talents of the original *Ghostbusters* with an interesting approach to the license, Terminal Reality looks set to turn our dreams into a reality – by giving a great franchise the AAA game it deserves. **Mark Serrels**

WHAT THEY SAY:

■ "...we've opted for high res, lots of destructible environments, lots of physics, and a more cinematic experience"

WHAT WE SAY:

■ Vigo of Carpathia, Slimer, Stay Puft Man... we're coming for you!

FINELY TUNED ENGINE

A huge part of *Ghostbusters: The Game* is shaped around the hugely destructive environments, most of which can be absolutely ripped to smithereens. Blasting apart chandeliers and various other objects with your Proton packs should prove to be a ridiculous amount of fun, and perfectly in keeping with some of the most memorable scenes from the movies. It's all thanks to their in-house-designed 'Infernus' engine, which also allows *Ghostbusters: The Game* to display over 3000 characters on screen at once.



PS3 PS2 PSP PREVIEW

■ GENRE: ACTION/RTS
■ PLAYERS: 1
■ RELEASE: EARLY 2008
■ DISTRIBUTOR: SEGA
■ DEVELOPER: CREATIVE ASSEMBLY
■ WEB: www.sega.com



■ The Viking world's first gay marriage ended in tears



■ Big ass swords = big ass dead. Yep, that sentence doesn't make sense grammatically...

INFO BYTE

It's actually a common misconception that Vikings wore horned helmets. Apparently they weren't scruffy or smelly either. Is nothing we believed true?

VIKING: BATTLE FOR ASGARD

Can Sega pillage the RTS genre to produce a console hit?

Life is full of mysteries. What was the greatest thing before sliced bread? Why don't you ever see the headline "Psychic Wins Lottery"? And if RTS games are so great, why has every single console attempt bombed without a trace?

Sega may not be able to answer all of life's mysteries but it's having a fair crack at the great RTS dilemma with its new game, *Viking: Battle for Asgard*. Sega's enlisted RTS expert The Creative Assembly (creator of the *Rome: Total War* franchise on PC) to take all of the best things about RTS games – namely awesome strategic depth and the ability to control hundreds of soldiers in titanic battles – and focused it all around a single heroic character.

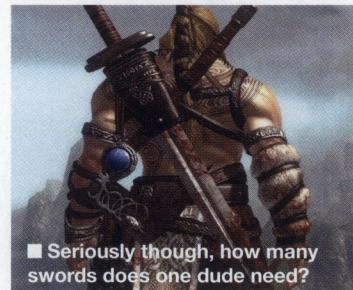
Sega's assumption is that the RTS genre has never been accessible on consoles because transplanting the complex keyboard and mouse controls onto a DualShock simply doesn't work. *Viking* neatly dodges this problem by giving you control of just one warrior. The majority of the game is played out through intense sword-based combat in the style of *Heavenly Sword*, however you've also got the added ability to give commands to your troops during battles and even have your deeds on the battlefield influence the moral of your troops. Want

your troops to hang back and play it safe, or push ahead and gain ground, or even follow along as you carve a path towards one of the enemy's powerful warlords? It's easy to issue orders like these during combat with the touch of a button.

Speaking of combat, Skarin sure knows how to handle his beefy blades. As well as the buckets of blood that bathe the battlefield during his merciless melee attacks Skarin can also unleash devastating fatalities. One we witnessed involved Skarin spinning around with his blades outstretched, decapitating enemies with frightening ferocity.

As well as the innovative interface and the grisly combat, Sega hopes the unique setting will help further distinguish the game. Rather than basing it around yet another contemporary conflict Sega has delved into the rich Viking history and Norse God mythology to create a fresh battleground. Players will heft the mighty twin blades of the heroic Skarin, tasked with defeating banished Goddess Hel and her army of undead warriors before she can enslave all of Midgard. Here's hoping Skarin can negotiate a truce with Hel... in bed! What? Her nickname is totally God of Whore. True story.

Considering the terrible track record RTS titles have had on consoles we



■ Seriously though, how many swords does one dude need?

A FEW GOOD MEN

Skarin wouldn't get anywhere in this game without the help of his fellow Viking warriors. An early mission sees Skarin trying to defeat some fairly sizeable enemy patrols. Taking them on single-handedly would be suicide. Instead Skarin needs to sneak into enemy territory, free a squad of his buddies, then get them into position on either side of a narrow path the enemy patrols along – then it's welcome to Ambush City, population piles and piles of enemy corpses.



WHAT THEY SAY:

■ "Skarin is a cutting edge hero in a fantastic re-imagining of Norse Mythology. [He's] gaming's next great hero."

WHAT WE SAY:

■ Frankly Skarin's a little generic and forgettable – luckily the rest of the game is anything but.

PS3 PS2 PSP PREVIEW

■ GENRE: TURN-BASED STRATEGY
■ PLAYERS: 1- TBA
■ RELEASE: TBA 2008
■ DISTRIBUTOR: 2K
■ DEVELOPER: FIREAXIS
■ WEB: civilizationrevolution.com



SID MEIER'S CIVILIZATION REVOLUTION

You say you want a revolution?

Fat men, greasy beards, perennially without a girlfriend... these are just some of the things that spring to the mind of us super-cool console gamers when someone whispers the word *Civilization* into our ears.

This is because, face it, if you're not a PC gamer chances are you've never played *Civilization* before, and considering the fact that turn-based strategy games have been a complete and utter bust on consoles since the dawn of gaming time, you quite probably loathe and detest the genre with every bone in your body.

And that's why Fireaxis' decision to port the game, in the form of *Civilization Revolution*, is such a gutsy one. Many big names of the genre (such as *Command & Conquer*, *Settlers*, etc.) have tried to walk this uneasy cross platform gauntlet and few have succeeded, mostly due to finicky control issues.

But thankfully this is where Fireaxis has focused much of its attention, streamlining a control system that is used to having a keyboard worth of function keys into the humble SIXAXIS controller.

Admittedly there has been a whole lot of shoehorning and a lot of simplification, but from what we've seen so far of *Civilization Revolution* Fireaxis has done a pretty solid job of combining the depth of the original with the accessibility you would hope for on console.

The feel of the game is retained but city management in particular has been simplified to a certain extent, making it easier for players to charge into the real meat of the game – which is competing against and destroying other civilisations via either brute strength, or the progression of your dominating culture.

The addictive 'one more turn' game mechanic that has turned many into fully-fledged insomniac *Civilization* nighthawks has been retained in *Revolution*. Exploration seems to play a huge role as always, and even in the short demo we played the urge to keep going was tangible: we can't imagine how bad it's going to get when we have the thing at home. To all our wives, and the gaming widows amongst you: we apologise in advance – please don't divorce us!

When it comes to strategy games, we at OPS generally tend to be a bit selective: *Command & Conquer*, *Company of Heroes*, and, yes, the *Civilization* series, are usually where our familiarity ends. Precious few have managed to translate the true addictive nature of the genre to console with any sort of success, so naturally we're a little sceptical with regards to *Civilization Revolution*. That being said however, what we've seen so far has been reassuring; *Civilization Revolution* seems to be on the right path, and should hopefully be civilising the masses before too long.

■ **Mark Serrels**

WHAT THEY SAY:
■ "Civilization Revolution is the game I've always wanted to make!"

WHAT WE SAY:
■ *Civilization Revolution* is the game we've always wanted to play! Gaming widows beware: your husband/ wife is going to be away for a while...



WHAT HAVE THEY EVER DONE FOR US?

When it comes to *Civilization* the Romans seem to be a popular choice, headed of course by Julius Caesar, but there are plenty more to choose from: Shaka Zulu of the Africans, Napoleon of the French, Catherine the Great of the Russians, Cleopatra of the Egyptians, Saladin of the Arabs to name but a few. Where in the blue hell is William Wallace of the Scottish? Where is he!?



ANiMEBLiTZ

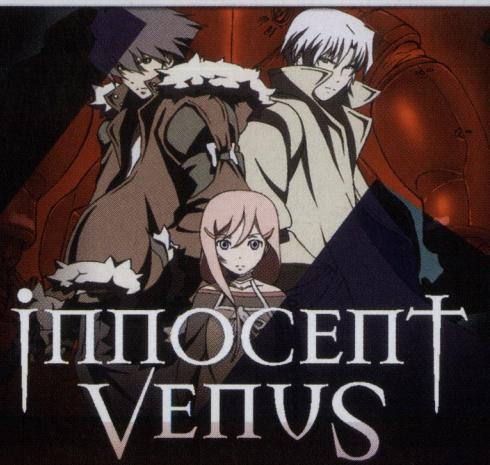
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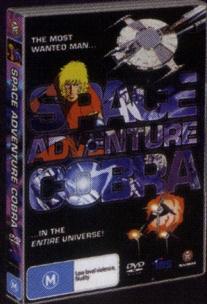
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GUNDAM SEED
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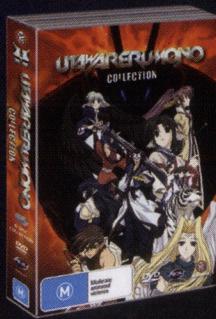
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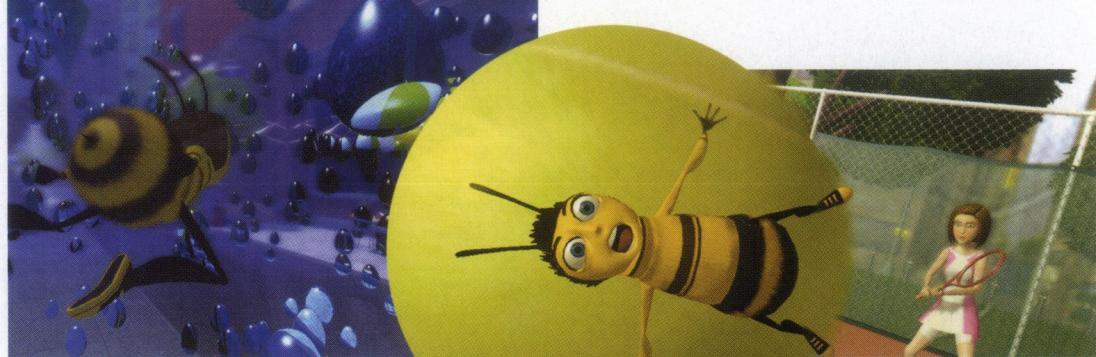
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MADMAN
ANIME

PS3 PS2 PSP PREVIEW

■ GENRE: ADVENTURE
 ■ PLAYERS: 1
 ■ RELEASE: DECEMBER 2007
 ■ DISTRIBUTOR: ACTIVISION
 ■ DEVELOPER: BEENOX
 ■ WEB: www.beemoviegame.com



BEE MOVIE GAME

Feature request: dogs that bark and shoot bees at you

Take the tip from gamers who suffered through *E.T.* on Atari 2600; some movie to game conversions need to be smeared with concrete and then buried in a landfill in Mexico. This has long been the case throughout videogame history, and while it's slowly being phased out, we're still plagued by the occasional "so-abysmal-they're-piss-funny" licensed games like *Bad Boys* and *Catwoman*.

The *Bee Movie Game* that will shortly come buzzing past could go either way, but it does feature mission objectives like 'Please Vanessa by pollinating the area'. Oh baby, now we're talking.

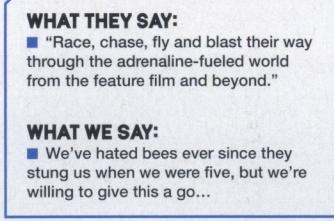
Featuring amusing visuals, large environments and the comedic stylings of Jerry Seinfeld as Barry the bee; *Bee Movie Game* may well have the goods.

From what we were shown it looks as though the main game has you flying through large garden environments, snagging items, dog fighting with dragonflies, and... er... getting your pollination on. These main levels get broken up with mini-games that involve button pressing quick-time events, tense flights through peak hour New York traffic, and some gladiatorial kart racing against rival bees.

Things are shaping up pretty well for the imaginatively titled *Bee Movie Game*; we're looking forward to playing more of the game, listening to Jerry make observational 'didja-ever-notice' quips about how bees' arses detach when they sting somebody, and 'what is the deal?' with millions of guys and only one queen – and so on. **Adam Mathew**



■ *Bee Movie Game*? Why couldn't they just call it *Bee Game*, but more to the point: why is a bee driving a taxi?



WHAT THEY SAY:

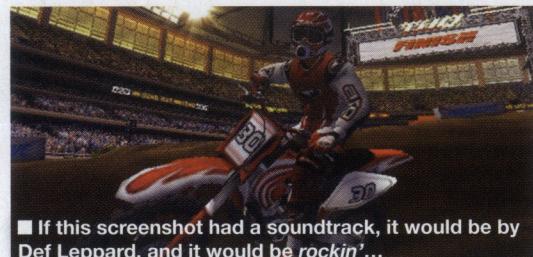
■ "Race, chase, fly and blast their way through the adrenaline-fueled world from the feature film and beyond."

WHAT WE SAY:

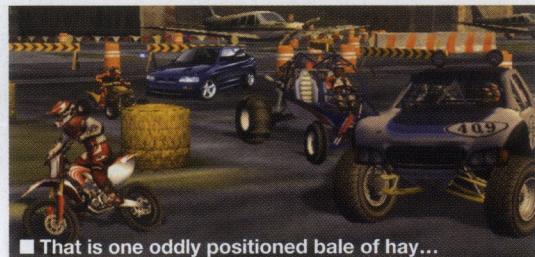
■ We've hated bees ever since they stung us when we were five, but we're willing to give this a go...

PS3 PS2 PSP PREVIEW

■ GENRE: RACING
 ■ PLAYERS: 1 (TBC)
 ■ RELEASE: \$49.95
 ■ DISTRIBUTOR: THQ
 ■ DEVELOPER: RAINBOW STUDIOS
 ■ WEB: www.mxvsatv.com



■ If this screenshot had a soundtrack, it would be by Def Leppard, and it would be rockin'...



■ That is one oddly positioned bale of hay...



MX VS. ATV: UNTAMED

Oh, why can't all these bikes just get along?

Godzilla vs. King Kong, The Wallabies vs. The All Blacks and now *MX vs. ATV: Untamed*. We're not really sure if that means all previous MX and ATV games were tamed (and if so – by whom) but this game promises to show MX bikes and ATVs running wild in their natural habitat.

All 'hilarious' japery aside, *MX vs. ATV: Untamed* is probably the closest thing the PS2 will get to having a *MotorStorm* type experience. So how did it fare when we monkeyed around with this brand new preview code?

Well, first off, there're heaps of options. You can pretty much tee up any kind of race of any length, deciding which vehicles can race and which can't, what track you use, the number of laps – which was all very impressive. There's

nothing worse than a racer with bugger-all options. Well, being stabbed in the kidney's may be worse, but this comes a close second.

Less impressive – at this stage – was the actual racing. Despite the many tracks there was just an overwhelming sense of brown in the colour palette.

Also the physics of the bikes and ATVs was all a bit... floaty – as if you were racing on the moon. Having said that, these things are highly fixable and the game's numerous options, varied soundtrack and multiplayer may prove this grudge match is a belter.

Drab graphics aside, if they can get the vehicle physics down this game may be a diamond in the rough. We'll be watching and will give you the good oil soon. **Anthony O'Connor**



WHAT THEY SAY:

■ "Groundbreaking MX vs. ATV career mode – MX bikes and ATVs meet to determine racing's best machine."

WHAT WE SAY:

■ Hey, take down the brown a few notches, make the physics a little sharper and we're there, baby.



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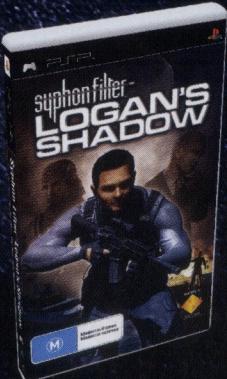
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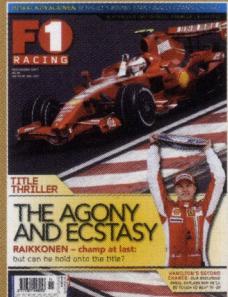
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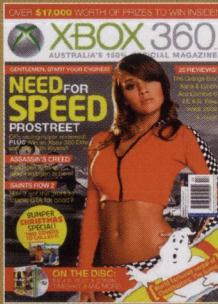


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OPS GAME OF THE YEAR AWARDS 2007

WORDS BY MARK SERRELS

Welcome ladies and gentlemen, boys and girls, pets and miscellaneous, to OPS' game of the year extravaganza, where we separate the wheat from the chaff, the cream from the crop, the good games from the um... not-quite-so-good games.

And boy, oh boy, what a year it's been – one of the best ever you might say. Even with the absence of a couple of games that could possibly have taken all the awards (*GTAIV* and *MGS4*) to say that we've been flooded with an abundance of quality in the last couple of months would be a bit of an understatement.

But we started the year in good stead as well, with the initial spate of PS3 launch titles, and some PS2 games that redefined what the machine could do. With the flurry of recent game activity, we've been careful not to ignore those that came before.

So from *God of War II* to *Assassin's Creed*, *Final Fantasy XII* to *Folklore*, for better or worse, here are our games of the year. Read and be reassured, or rip up the mag in a spate of disgust – the choice is yours. Cue the drum roll, start the music: the ceremony is about to begin...



SPORTS

2008 was a year where sports games as a whole underwent somewhat of a small revolution, with more precision in controls at the forefront. It arguably began with *Fight Night Round 3* utilising the analogue sticks to manipulate the type of punches thrown. The stick were also well used as a trick system in the new *FIFA*, but implemented best in the sublime *SKATE*.

This is probably the major reason why *SKATE* is our sports game of the year, but far from the only reason. We could go on and on about the intuitive flickit controls, but it would be an injustice to forget about the brilliantly executed online set up, tailored specifically to support a burgeoning online community, or the subtle design, perfectly mimicking the look and feel of skate videos.

And the way in which the world of San Vanelona balances a seamlessly organic environment with rewarding level design is astounding. You never feel like you are playing in a glorified skate park, but you always have that sense of rewarding fun: a stellar achievement that should not be underestimated.

In our minds *SKATE* is the best next gen sports game hands down, and it's hard to see that changing any time soon. With infinite replay value, perfectly balanced controls, and a game environment that matches the scope of any sandbox game on the market, *SKATE* is simply a joy to play.

WINNER: *SKATE*

HONOURABLE MENTIONS: *Pro Evolution Soccer 2008*, *FIFA 08*, *Fight Night Round 3*, *Virtua Tennis 3*



PLAYSTATION STORE GAMES

What a first year for the PlayStation Network. For gamers looking at a shorter time and money investment, the PS Store had a lot of bang for your buck. One of the first must buys of the year was *f1ow*. More meditation than game, *f1ow* allowed you to evolve from a tiny little translucent blob into, well, a bigger translucent blob. It plays a lot better than it sounds, becoming strangely addictive towards the end, if you can call it an 'end'.

Calling All Cars! is also worth a mention. When your name is David Jaffe and you pretty much invented *God of War*, there is a certain burden of expectation on your first PSN game. Well, Mr. Jaffe didn't disappoint, with one of the most compulsive games on the store hands down.

But it was *Super Stardust HD* that ultimately rocked our jocks the most. Based upon an old school aesthetic of 'blast every bloody thing in sight without prejudice' and balanced with intelligent weapon design, *Super Stardust* was beyond compulsive. It pretty much took over your life. If you can only buy one game from the PlayStation Network we recommend this one.

WINNER: *Super Stardust HD*

HONOURABLE MENTIONS: *Calling All Cars!*, *Tekken 5: Dark Resurrection*, *PixelJunk Racers*, *f1ow*

PARTY STARTERS

If, like the annoying, but kinda hot Pink, you like to get the party started, you could do a lot worse than the hugely successful peripheral led games of the PS2, and now the PS3. Easily accessible games that negate the use of increasingly complicated controllers are generally popular with even the least adept of players, making it easy for all to enjoy.

SingStar is hardly the choice of the hardcore, being the most casual of all the party starters, but that doesn't mean it can't be fun. The market was flooded this year with plenty of *SingStar* action, but *Rock Ballads* was probably the best of a mediocre bunch.

Buzz! was loaded with titles. The *Buzz! Junior* franchise was pretty much reprehensible, but the more recent *Buzz!: The Hollywood Quiz* did have a huge amount of questions. Despite the distinct lack of film clips and the 'questionable' difficulty level (film buffs will find little challenge here) the *Buzz!* games are consistently fun in groups – especially if you're keen to show how 'smart' you are in front of your dumb friends.

But in the end *Guitar Hero* won the day. *Guitar Hero Encore: Rocks the 80s* was a solid addition for the PS2, despite suffering from a disappointing song list. *Guitar Hero III* had no such problems, blasting away even the upcoming *Rock Band* in terms of song choices. If you want to start your party with gusto: look no further.

WINNER: *Guitar Hero III*

HONOURABLE MENTIONS: *Buzz!: The Hollywood Quiz*, *Guitar Hero Encore: Rocks the 80s*, *SingStar '90s*, *SingStar Rock Ballads*



SHOOTERS

It's been an absolute maelstrom of a year for shooters in 2007. We opened of course with the superlative *Resistance: Fall of Man*, a game that showed the initial potential of the PS3, and displayed an exceptional wealth of options online. *Resistance* reigned supreme, even fighting off *Rainbow Six*, before *Warhawk* blew us away with its brilliant execution of numerous different types of combat.

But the month of November came and everything changed.

Both *Call of Duty 4* and *The Orange Box* blew away the competition for us, but with all due respect to *Half-Life 2*, *The Orange Box* was basically a three-year-old game with some awesome add ons. *Call of Duty 4* on the other hand was a familiar concept blasted up to date with modern weapons and pure visceral entertainment of the top notch variety.

Only a handful of games come close to matching *Call of Duty 4*'s incredible presentation, but none can compete with its execution of set piece action. It's really the first FPS to really push the genre forward in that respect, making mincemeat of all that came before it.

And then there's the multiplayer. *COD4* is destined to suck up your bandwidth with it's perfectly designed maps and innovative perks system. Here we have a game that not only matched expectations but completely obliterated them, becoming our vote for the best shooter of the year.

WINNER: *Call of Duty 4*

HONOURABLE MENTIONS: *Resistance: Fall of Man*, *The Darkness*, *The Orange Box*, *Warhawk*



RPGs

The RPG is perhaps the genre in which the PS2 is best represented this year. Mostly due to the overspill of games from 2006 that took that little bit of extra time to get over to Australian shores.

First off the boat was *Okami*, undoubtedly the closest thing PlayStation has ever got to *Zelda* – but in some ways *Okami* eclipsed Nintendo's perennial masterpiece. With its mindblowing art style and slick level design *Okami* was a real surprise to all who played it. If you missed out on this one, we recommend you get a copy by any means necessary.

Final Fantasy XII was another RPG that arrived late to the Christmas party, hitting Oz around Feb, but it was worth the wait. Arguably the best *Final Fantasy* since a fella named Sephiroth got a bit nasty, *FFXII* revamped the franchise with a new battle system that brought more interactivity to a decade old system.

But, inevitably, the sheer power of the PS3 won out with the release of *The Elder Scrolls IV: Oblivion*. The PS3 has had its fair share of rushed ports in 2007, but *Oblivion* was not one of them. With a heavily increased draw distance and speedier loading times, the PS3 version of *Oblivion* immediately became the version to own. With an insanely huge game world full of endless possibility and scope, *The Elder Scrolls IV* is probably the greatest RPG ever conceived, and is undoubtedly our pick for RPG of the year.

WINNER: *The Elder Scrolls IV: Oblivion*

HONOURABLE MENTIONS: *Folklore*, *Final Fantasy XII*, *Rogue Galaxy*, *Okami*



GAME OF THE YEAR: PERSONAL EDITION!



JAMES

CALL OF DUTY 4: MODERN WARFARE

If *COD4* were a lady I'd batte her down and roll over her in a straightjacket of warm honey. She throws out all sorts of pant-melting heat. Throw in missions memorable enough to write home about, plus some top multiplayer, and she's earned the right to have my babies.



NAZ

CALL OF DUTY 4: MODERN WARFARE

Having all of the American 2006 PS3 titles rolled over into 2007 for our March PS3 launch has really made for an incredibly tough Game of the Year decision. 2007 saw far more thoroughly deserving classics than our wallets could ever cope with but my money's got to be on *COD4*.



MARK

ASSASSIN'S CREED

I had been a-lusting after *AC* since it was announced, to the extent that I actually had three legitimate dreams about it. When it finally hit the office my *Assassin's Fever* was so high, so astronomical that the best compliment I can give was that I wasn't disappointed.



ACTION

Undoubtedly this was the category that inspired the most debate of any, with at least three genuine contenders, in particular two, that could legitimately be called the Action Game of the Year.

Considering the glut of PS3 action titles, we almost forgot about the epic *God of War 2*, but as soon the game was mentioned it became a spectre that haunted proceedings. *GoW2*'s scope was one that belied the PS2's limited hardware, really becoming the action game to beat as the latter half of the year approached.

Heavenly Sword came close, with an insane enemy count that ran into the thousands, but a short running time stopped it from competing with the big guns that followed...

Because once again the Christmas titles hit the office and changed everything.

The first time we played *Uncharted: Drake's Fortune* our jaws hit the floor collectively. We expected a solid platformer, but we were shocked to find that *Uncharted* did so many things brilliantly, with the best graphics on any console to date.

But after finally playing *Assassin's Creed* it was hard to go back to any action game. Here was a game that reinvented the wheel, with an intuitive control system that allowed seamless interaction with one of the most detailed game worlds ever conceived. It blew us away, and we're convinced it'll blow you away too.

WINNER: *Assassin's Creed*

HONOURABLE MENTIONS: *Uncharted: Drake's Fortune*, *Heavenly Sword*, *Ratchet and Clank Future*, *God of War II*



RACERS

2007 was a solid year for racers but the oppressive presence of *Gran Turismo 5* seemed to loom ominously over rev heads like an obscuring mist. Sure we had a healthy serving of solid games to play through, but would they better the 'the real driving simulator'? Probably not: *Gran Turismo 5* has the potential to obliterate the genre and leave its rivals in tatters.

But anyway – onto 2007. *MotorStorm* was probably our favourite Australian launch title, and was really the first game that showed a tangible gap between the PS3 and its competition. *MotorStorm* was a game without pretence; in no way did the game ever come close to accuracy or realism, but when you're having as much fun as we were, careering over insane jumps, smacking people from their motorcycles, who really gave a crap.

And the graphics... the mud! It just looked so shiny and real. Throw in a well-balanced boost mechanic that pushed players to the edge of absolute annihilation on more than one occasion, and you have undoubtedly one of the most fun racers ever created.

In *MotorStorm*'s wake came many pretenders to the throne. *DIRT* was probably the best of this bunch, combining the adrenaline fuelled rush of *MotorStorm* with some added depth. *ProStreet* was ultimately slightly disappointing, and *Sega Rally* was too shallow to legitimately challenge our racing game of the year: *MotorStorm*.

WINNER: *MotorStorm*

HONOURABLE MENTIONS: *Colin McRae DIRT*, *Sega Rally*, *Need for Speed ProStreet*, *Stuntman: Ignition*



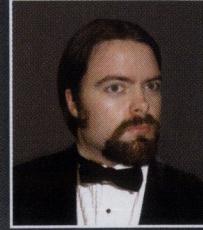
ADAM
SUPER STARDUST HD

Being a creature of pure spite, I've selected something devoid of hype: *Super Stardust HD*. It cost me sweet bugger all and months later I'm still shooting up like a junkie because the psychedelic, twitch gameplay completes me. The only negative – Naz and Phill have doubled my freakin' score.



LUKE
ASSASSIN'S CREED

Man, it went down to the wire (I'm seriously digging *COD4* and *Uncharted: Drake's Fortune*) but for what it's done for fluid and free movement *Assassin's Creed* gets my nod. You try playing another game now and dealing with the fact it doesn't let you climb *everything*.



ANTHONY
UNCHARTED: DRAKE'S FORTUNE

Okay, so people will ask me why not *COD4* or *Assassin's Creed*. I love those games too, but the thing about *Uncharted* is I was expecting so little, but got so much. The journey Drake takes you on is exciting, violent and brilliant. It's like living the three disc box set of *Indiana Jones*.

OVERALL GAME OF THE YEAR

This was difficult – no scratch that – this was damn near impossible, negotiations almost broke down into a full-scale riot.

All the 10/10 games were all looked at in full, but despite the fact that both *Resistance* and *MotorStorm* had been mindblowing on launch, to some extent both games had been surpassed by more recent releases in the lead up to Christmas. *Oblivion* was an absolutely boggling achievement as a piece of software, but we felt that the fact that the game had been released on other formats in 2006 made it difficult for us to name it as game of the year for 2007...

But we had also dished out a pair of PS2 10/10s, and believed that these games couldn't be so easily dismissed. *Final Fantasy XII* was ruled out relatively quickly, simply due to the fact that it was really a 2006 game released late in Australia and was ultimately surpassed by the sublime *Oblivion*. *God of War II* was a different prospect entirely however – as a game that pushed the PS2 beyond its limitations to create an experience of epic proportions, *GoW2* was second to none.

But then *Uncharted* came along, and made our eyeballs twitch endlessly with disbelief, *Call of Duty 4* made our synapses collapse into haemorrhage and *Assassin's Creed* just felt like some awesome (possibly wet) dream. After this triple punch combination it was clear that the game of the year would be a three-way race between these last-minute contenders.

Uncharted fell at the first hurdle. We loved the game, but felt that as far as pushing gaming forward into new territory, it fell a little short of the revolutionary *Assassin's Creed*, which really did achieve its mandate of redefining action.

So we were left with *Call of Duty 4* and *Assassin's Creed*, the two remaining giants of 2007. Who would prevail? It was a decision none of us really wanted to make. *Call of Duty 4*, for us, was the first FPS that really felt like a huge leap forward from last generation, and a game that really made us comprehend how much a difference a smooth 60fps frame rate made to gameplay. The explosive set pieces that punctuated the action were second to none.

But it was so hard to look past *Assassin's Creed*. Not since *GTA III* had we seen a game with the power to absolutely grind production to a halt. The minute we started clambering up walls, and gutting guards, it felt like gaming would never be the same. *Uncharted* arguably looked better, and *Call of Duty 4* elicited more adrenaline, but nothing really felt quite as next gen, or as smooth and infinitely playable as *Assassin's Creed*. Nothing felt as new, or as fresh, and that is why, after many hours of deliberation, *Assassin's Creed* is our game of the year.

WINNER: *Assassin's Creed*

HONOURABLE MENTIONS: *Call of Duty 4*, *Uncharted: Drake's Fortune*, *God of War II*, *The Elder Scrolls 4: Oblivion*, *MotorStorm*, *SKATE*, *Resistance*



WINNER





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JUNGLE BOOGIE

WORDS: LUKE REILLY

THE TUROK SERIES BEGAN...

way back in 1997 on Nintendo 64 but, while the first few titles were both critically and commercially successful, the quality of the series began to dip. We thought 2002's dirty great big mound of dino-droppings *Turok Evolution* would be the final nail in the coffin for the franchise. It certainly didn't help former publisher Acclaim - it went bankrupt shortly after its failure. But Turok is back, better than ever - no bones about it. A new owner, a new developer, a new vision and a new start: it's a Turok do-over. *Turok* is to *Turok Evolution* is what *Batman Begins* is to *Batman & Robin* - a clean slate, a series reboot. Does it have the makings of a jurassic classic or is it just a crusty old fossil? More importantly, will it save the series from imminent extinction? Read on...

■ "Where's the goat? ARRRRGHH!"



■ Craig was a happy henchman. He enjoyed his job, and he appreciated the dental and decent pension plan. That was, of course, until his crotch exploded in a brilliant ball of white light...



DINOSAURS IN THE BIBLE

Kids ask it. Legendary stand-up comic Bill Hicks asked it. Well, according to 'Young Earth creationists' they are in there. They believe mankind and dinosaurs lived side-by-side (so we guess, to them, *The Flintstones* is historically accurate). During our research we even found a kids colouring book that claims the J-man 'probably' rode upon dinosaurs. Of course, they also believe the world is only 10,000 years old, rather than the 4.5 billion years calculated by geochronological methods like radiometric dating. Hmmm...



■ Jesus. Big dinosaur fan

Vancouver. It's a relaxed city, home to around 600,000 friendly Canadians who tend to add, "ey?" to the end of their sentences and who really, really like ice hockey. It's also home to a ridiculous number of development studios. It's quickly become the interactive capital of Canada. EA Black Box is based in Vancouver (with EA Canada not far away) and so is Relic, Radical Entertainment, Rockstar Vancouver and Propaganda Games.

It's the latter we're here to see.

Owned by Disney Interactive Studios, Propaganda Games was formed back in 2005 by a few EA Canada escapees who acquired the *Turok* license the same year. *Turok*, then, is Propaganda's first title – the game that will debut the studio on the world stage and set its reputation. Thus, there's quite a bit riding on it. It can't just be better than the infamous *Turok Evolution*. A pineapple up your arse would probably be better than *Turok Evolution*. Sideways, no less.

No, *Turok* needs to be *much* better. It needs to be good. Really good.

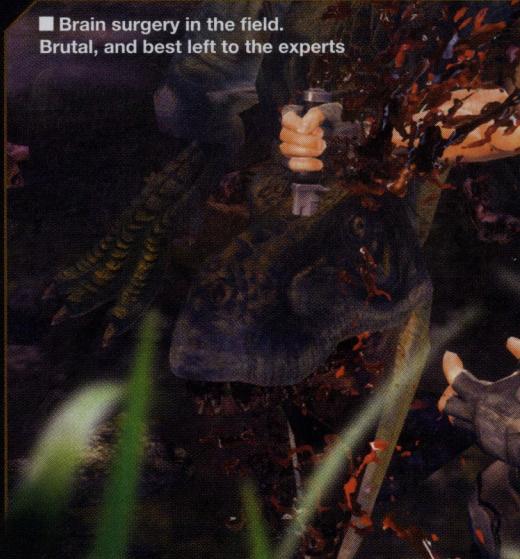
Fortunately, from what we've seen of it – it is.

TUROK AND ROLL

A moody first-person shooter set sometime in the not-too-distant future, *Turok* is the tale of Native American badass Joseph Turok – an elite special forces operator, and one-time member of a group known as Wolf Pack, tasked with taking down his former mentor, Roland Kane, who has gone rogue.

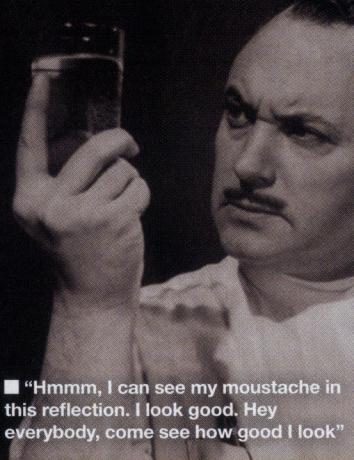
En route to an Earth-like planet, where Kane and his private army are currently holed-up, Turok's transport is blasted out of the sky and crash-lands on

■ Brain surgery in the field. Brutal, and best left to the experts



ATTACK OF THE CLONES

So will we, one day, be able to walk amongst dinosaurs thanks to modern science and the magic of cloning? Apparently, and depressingly, it doesn't look like it. The unfortunate fact is that too much of the dino-DNA is lost as it degrades over several million years (and it can't be improvised or replaced with frog DNA). Besides, assembling the genome and the chromosomes is apparently out of the question. Even if you could, in vertebrates the same (or very closely related) species' egg and cytoplasm are required for the egg to develop normally (croc eggs won't work). And even if you found that magic egg? Well, the dino would be born into a world it has no resistance to and almost certainly die. Sigh...



■ "Hmmm, I can see my moustache in this reflection. I look good. Hey everybody, come see how good I look"

the surface. Most of Turok's current spec-ops crew, Whiskey Company, are paste inside a few thousands tonnes of space ship flotsam and the remaining survivors are scattered. Will any of this stop him? Naturally, no.

To summarise the rest without ruining too much, you survive, escape the wreckage and proceed to stab loads of dinosaurs. In the face.

And blow them up.

You'll be doing this a lot, actually. Don't wear your best shoes.

BLOOD, SWEAT AND FEAR

"We call that the meat fountain," chuckles Tim Lewinson, associate director on

Turok, as a charging Dilophosaurus explodes in a shocking spray of blood and innards. Bite-sized chunks fall to the turf with a satisfying squish and red-soaked dismembered limbs flap wildly like stranded fish.

"What good are parts if they don't quiver?" adds Jaysen Huculak, lead programmer, and the room erupts in laughter as a second dino gets a bead on Turok and makes a dash for him.

This one actually gets closer than the last, but not before it's stuck with another of Turok's handy sticky grenades. It disintegrates mere feet away mid-step, knocking Turok backwards and sending a bucket of blood and body parts arcing over him and landing with a series of soft thuds somewhere behind.

"There are times when I sit back and wonder, 'How did we get this past Disney?' That's one of the advantages of being on the Touchstone label," says Lewinson.

There's no doubt *Turok* is plenty violent, and it is hard to imagine sugary-sweet, kid-friendly Disney stumping up the cash for this sucker. But it did.

There's no way around it though, because it comes with the territory really. You can't mix dinosaurs with a first-person shooter and expect anything less. Giant carnivores. Giant guns. *Turok* is what happens when they combine. It's what the punters want.

THE LOST WORLD

We should stress, however, that this prehistoric slaughter is broken up by plenty of the FPS fare you're more accustomed to. Human bad guys, in other words – and they're pretty smart.

One early level sees Turok charged with taking care of some unlucky goons patrolling near long grass. Crouching in the grass is enough to disguise you from view, and you'll be able to creep up behind enemy soldiers undetected. Once you're close enough a simple prompt will tell you when it's time to make with the stabbing – trigger it and the camera will temporarily switch to a third-person view of the nasty execution.

CRACK! Turok stomps on the back of the soldier's calf. THWACK! The knife goes in and out of his chest with one seamless motion. THUMP! Turok knocks the dying guard on his face with a swift kick in the spine. Nice. The stealth kills vary depending on the relative positions of Turok and the target.

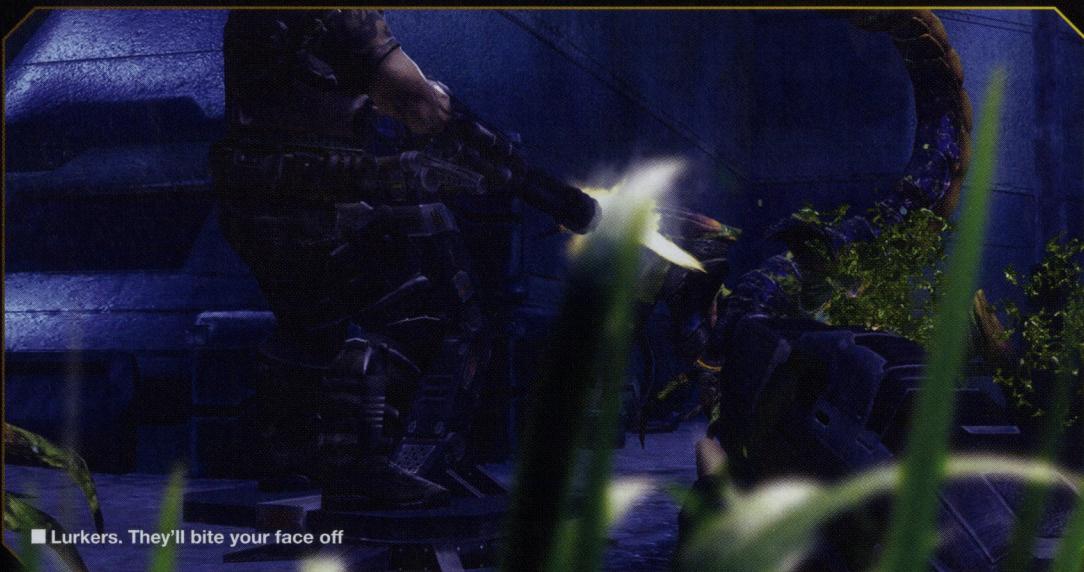
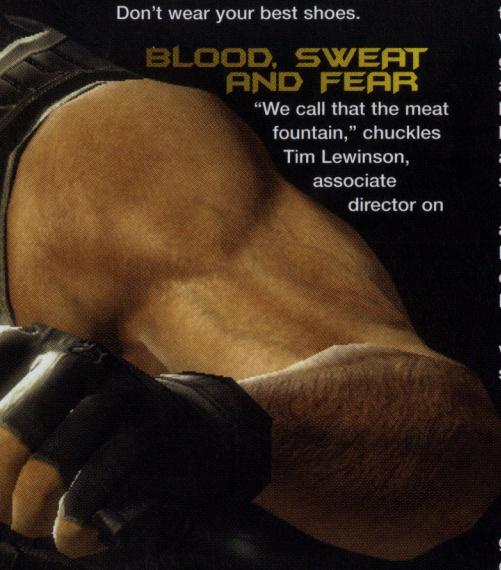
However, once you've taken out this scumbag the wealth of options you now have become clear. There are no less than two more guards patrolling the tundra below, with others relaxing elsewhere. You could plug them with arrows fired from your tek bow, or you could sneak up and knife the sods. You could open fire from above, although you'll definitely get the attention of two

nearby raptors feasting on a carcass. One of the better options would be to fire a flare near the enemies, attract the hungry dinos and kick back and watch the slaughter.

The addition of neutral AI adds a genuinely interesting new dynamic to what's essentially a conventional first-person shooter. It's not unique (it's been done elsewhere on a few occasions) but it's certainly uncommon. Free agents on the battlefield, the dinos can be both common enemies and unlikely allies. Fail to stay frosty in a firefight and you shouldn't be surprised if a nearby raptor attempts to turn your skull into a bowl. Likewise, however, if you reconnoitre the area a little first you might be able to spot a few dormant dinos you can lead to your unsuspecting human opponents with judicious use of your flares (which dinosaurs are conveniently attracted to, it's science – just ask Jeff Goldblum. Seriously).

TU LEGIT

We like the new *Turok*. He's a real throwback to the pre-politically correct days where heroes were required to have arms the size of tree trunks, say very little and kill most of the people they met. Remember Arnie in *Predator*? Remove the Austrian accent, make him of Kiowa descent and give him a mohawk. That's *Turok*. The kind of guy you'd like to have on your side in a pub



■ Lurkers. They'll bite your face off

GORENOGRAPHY

The best big-screen dinosaur moments movies have to offer.



They say one day you're gonna get caught with your pants down – but honestly... by a T. rex? What are the odds?



Objects in mirror are closer than they appear. What a classic. Who knew Laura Dern could actually shriek this loud?



3 Giant monkey beats the snot out of three T. rexes. Who's king of the jungle now bitches?! Someone give that guy a banana.

fight, but wouldn't ask him to housesit. Or feed your cat.

Still, while Turok is the titular character the real stars of this game are the creatures and the weapons. We've had a hard time picking one group over the other.

On the one hand you've got the weird and wild fauna, ranging from the seminal T. rex (double its normal size thanks to a little creative license) to man-sized scorpions, spitting raptors and many more. *Turok*'s food chain includes around a dozen dinos, herbivores to carnivores and the tiny *Compsognathus* to the lumbering *Brachiosaurus*. It also includes oddities like the Lurkers, a cross between a lizard and an agile jungle cat that leap out of the trees as you pass, take a swipe at you and bugger off.

On the other, however, you've got a truckload of destructive gear; sticky grenade launchers, pulse rifles, flamethrowers, miniguns and plenty more. The absence of *Turok*'s familiar cerebral bore may disappoint some, but the attention lavished on the rest of the arsenal is evident. Many of the weapons can be duel-wielded too, including the shotgun – which is a particularly devastating combo. Of course, we can't

fail to mention the knife – traditionally the most useless weapons in any FPS weapons cache.

"It was one of the biggest challenges we set for ourselves, making sure the knife felt like perhaps the most powerful weapon in the game," says programmer Dave Smith.

It certainly does rock. It's an instant kill when you time it right, on dinos and human foes alike.

DINO-MITE!

We haven't even mentioned the multiplayer, which was revealed to us for the first time at Propaganda HQ.

It's definitely watertight, and the addition of dinos as an unpredictable and omnipresent third-party in the multiplayer matches is pretty neat. *Turok* will support up to 16 players online in its large, custom maps. We spent an afternoon playing against the best of the *Turok* team. We got knifed, shot and ended up dino chow on more than one occasion and loved every minute of it.

Call of Duty 4 is currently ruling the online roost, but *Turok* does have a few tricks up its sleeve.

"In our version of capture the flag, the little power core that you're carrying

actually attracts dinosaurs," explains Josh Bridge, lead level designer. "So the guy with 'the flag' is actually luring ALL the dinosaurs onto him as he tries to run back to his base."

Also, the last person who killed you actually glows red, so revenge is actively encouraged. Revenge isn't a dish best served cold. Revenge is a dish best served at 2900 feet per second – so start exercising those trigger fingers.

In addition to 16-player deathmatches *Turok* features a four-player co-op mode – not for the length of the main story, but rather a selection of levels that compliment the narrative.

"The thing I like about the co-op missions especially is that they're unique missions," says Bridge. "Not just re-tooled single-player maps."

2-ROK?

It's a solid package, no doubt. Tight single-player, robust multiplayer and a standalone four-player co-op mode. Hell, what didn't make it into *Turok*?

"There was a lot of stuff, but one of the things we put a tonne of effort into that didn't make it was drivable vehicles," says Joel Manners, game director on *Turok*. "Basically, they were

drivable, you could play our game, we had huge areas designed for them, they were super fun, and they had nothing to do with *Turok*."

"We just had this massive conflict – you're meant to be in this dark, creepy terrifying jungle, and then you're in this massive APC with turrets, driving down the road and all those dinosaurs that were super cool for you a second ago were just like road bumps and chickens. It felt so bad, and we had some great scenes with them. Of course there was a T. rex that chased you, of course there was – and we had that and it was enjoyable. But it was a different game."

Still, Manners did drop a few hints regarding downloadable content for *Turok* and the unsurprising existence of a potential sequel.

"Well, some of that stuff we don't really want to talk about because it could easily show up in additional content for *Turok* or it might be in the sequel that we're working on now," says Manners.

A sequel, huh? Don't call it 2-rok.

Honestly, there's quite a bit more to *Turok* than we can let on here – but we'll elaborate more when the final game lands February 8. Expect the full review of *Turok* next issue. ▶

FIVE THINGS THEY LIED TO YOU ABOUT DINOSAURS

1 Cavemen existed around the time of dinosaurs.

No. Mankind and dinosaurs are separated by about 65 million years. Duh...

2 A T. rex could run at 70km/h.

Unlikely. Modern research suggests no more than 30km/h brisk walk. A decent human sportsperson could outrun one. Falling at a higher speed would've killed it.

3 Velociraptors were 6-feet-tall and smarter than dolphins.

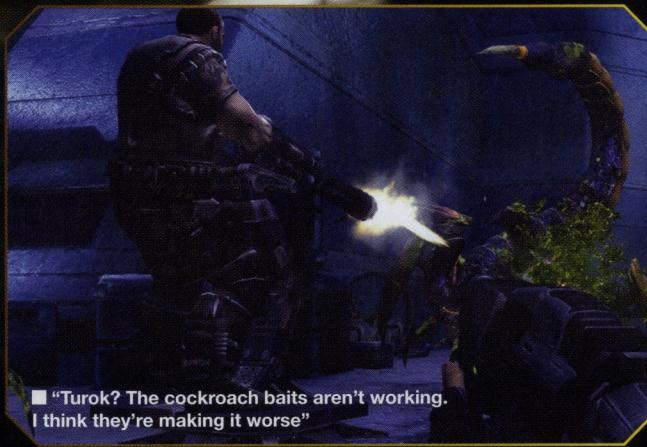
The real Velociraptor was actually only half that size (and had feathers). Also, their brains weren't near as elaborate as the brains of mammals or even most modern birds. So, no.

4 All dinosaurs died out 65 million years ago.

Actually, birds evolved about 150 million years ago and most experts believe they evolved from small predatory dinosaurs. This classifies them as dinosaurs according to modern methods of grouping animals. So there.

5 The Brontosaurus was the largest animal to ever grace the planet.

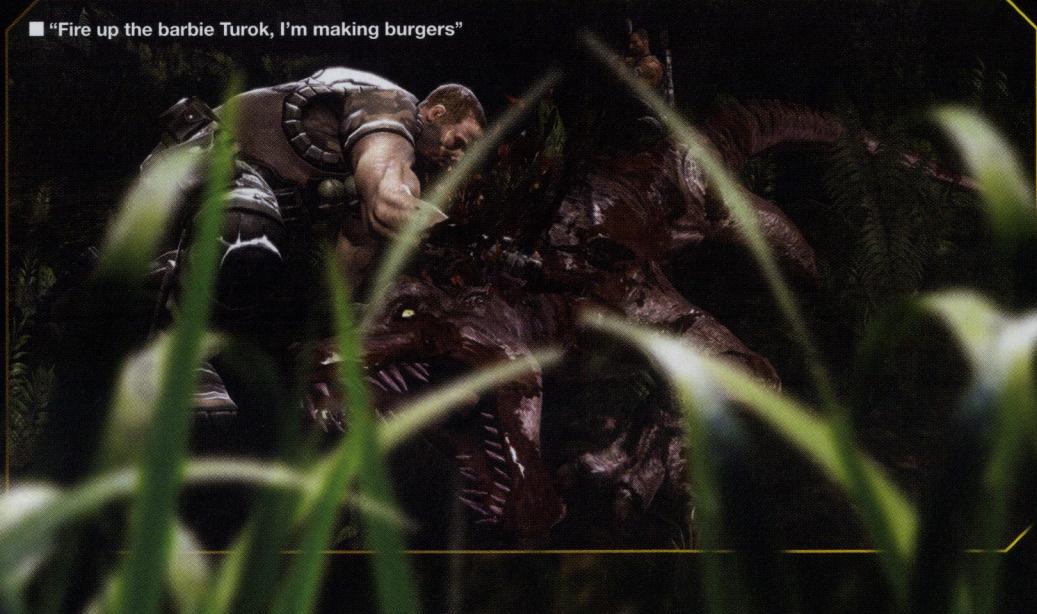
It wasn't – there were considerably bigger dinos than the Brontosaurus. In fact, the Brontosaurus was 'declassified' in 1903 when it was discovered it was the same species as a previously-named genus, *Apatosaurus* – so it doesn't really even exist (although people are still attached to the name). Also? The present-day blue whale is bigger than any dinosaur discovered to date. Just so you know.



■ "Turok? The cockroach baits aren't working. I think they're making it worse"



■ "Fire up the barbie Turok, I'm making burgers"



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WIRELESS GUITAR - GOOD

For those of you about to rock; and by rock we mean utterly trash a lounge room with this sucker tucked behind your head – we salute you. The legendary Gibson SG controller got immeasurably cooler when it was redesigned with wireless technology. Unfettered by the usual umbilical chord, this guitar lets you trot around like Angus Young and kick over imaginary sound equipment (read: chairs, lamps, your mate's grandma).



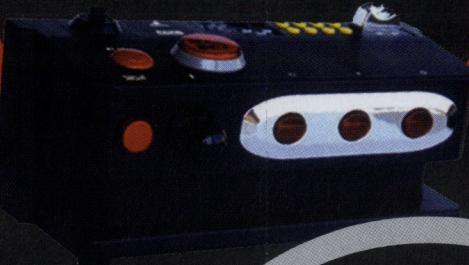
FFX-2 GUN CONTROLLER - BAD

Final Fantasy X-2 is cool. Wielding two awkward looking, 'non G-con functioning' guns and pretending you're the chick on screen – less cool. As a collector's item the guns are fantastic, but if you're buying these un-ergonomic, two halves of a DualShock just to roleplay as Yuna – you're in a brand new world of weird. Leave them in their box, display them on a cabinet, or go and get the surgery.



PACHI SLOT CONTROLLER - BAD

While they're responsible for creating the coolest inventions in our modern society, the Japanese can sure design some crazy shit. Pachinko is a game that has falling balls that make noises as they drop – and it's a national obsession over there, sort of like our pokies. While you're trying to comprehend that, consider this; this controller has a coin slot – making it perfect for ripping off your sad-case, gambling mates.



KATANA CONTROLLER - WTF

Resting in its ceremonial holder and roughly a metre in length, the katana controller was forged for two purposes; to enhance the gameplay of *Onimusha 3* and to look totally sweet. Featuring all the regular face buttons on its hilt, and a wireless range of about five feet; the sword translates movement into on-screen sword slashing. While it's certainly no SIXAXIS, you won't care as you thrash about indiscriminately killing things – both on-screen and off.



CONTROLLERS: THE GOOD THE BAD AND THE W.T.F.?

Controllers; without them we would be snap-kicking the TV to make the pixels move. We tried it too, it sucks. We should therefore recognise the importance of the humble controller and the truly sacred, symbiotic bond that we share.

We'd like to pause for a minute, to commemorate and appreciate these essential components of our beloved hobby, lest we forget the occasional shitey designed imposter that seemed like a brilliant idea at the time, but was ultimately an exercise in idiocy. Also, as we recant upon the accursed designs, let's all point and laugh at the weird arse ones – 'cause they's a goofy lookin'...



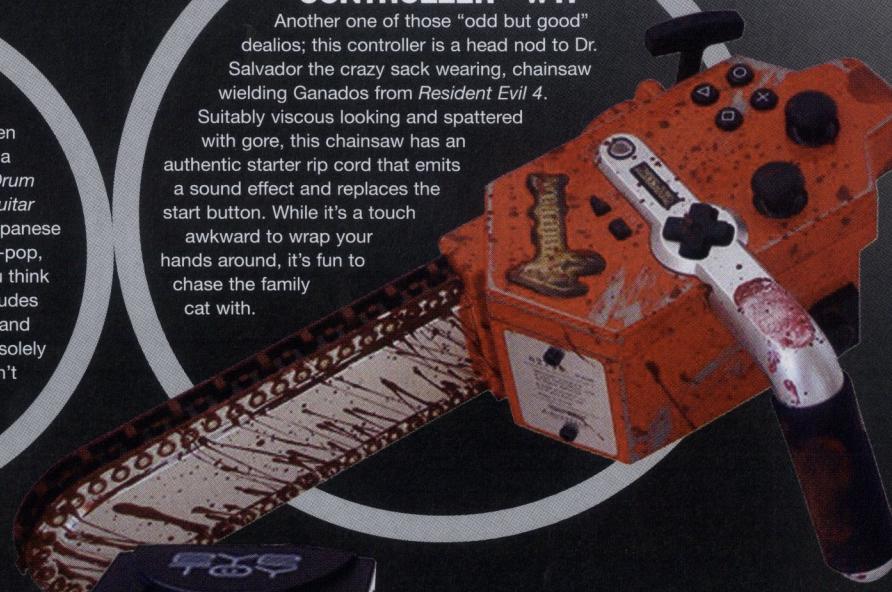
TATACON DRUMS - WTF

Feeling competitive and musical? Then get your Tatas out and get ready for a beat off. These were created for *Taiko Drum Masters*; a game which is basically a *Guitar Hero* that replaces guitars with obscure Japanese drums. The Japanese version features J-pop, classical music, and anime themes. If you think that's terrible, the American version includes tracks like 'Love Shack' by the B-52s, and (blech!) 'Toxic' by Britney Spears. Being solely designed for "music" like that; we don't even care if they work well.

CHAINSAW CONTROLLER - WTF

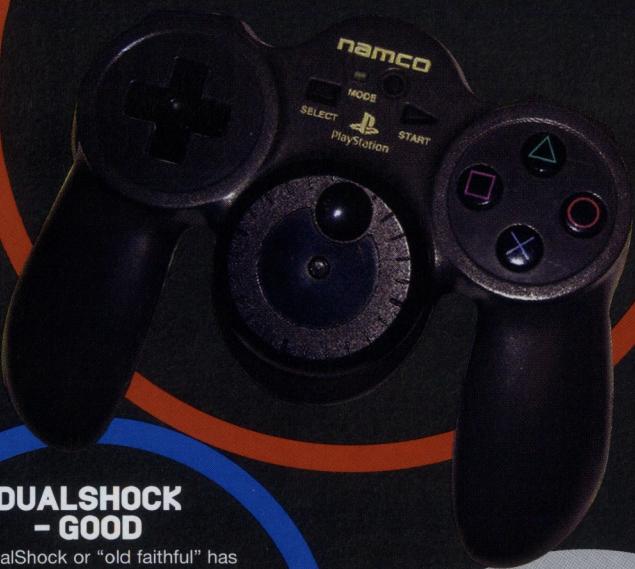
Another one of those "odd but good" dealios; this controller is a head nod to Dr. Salvador the crazy sack wearing, chainsaw wielding Ganados from *Resident Evil* 4.

Suitably viscous looking and spattered with gore, this chainsaw has an authentic starter rip cord that emits a sound effect and replaces the start button. While it's a touch awkward to wrap your hands around, it's fun to chase the family cat with.



JOGCON - BAD

Is it kind of a wheel? Is it a housing commission DualShock? Does Satan have these plugged into the PlayStations playing *Ridge Racer 4* in hell? The answer to all these questions, is yes. A controller featuring a force feedback dial like a steering wheel sounds great on paper, but in reality the dial only functions on games designed for it (practically none) and when it does work it's balls.



DUALSHOCK - GOOD

The DualShock or "old faithful" has been there during the blisters, sweat, and tears. If this old girl could talk she'd say, "You savagely wore down my youth and tossed me aside after you'd had your fun. So in return I've given you early arthritis - I want a divorce and I'm entitled to half of your games collection". Fact: this controller actually won an Emmy award for "Technological Impact".



EYETOY - GOOD

This peripheral is held high in our esteem for two reasons; firstly it expanded the console conquest by selling the PS2 to millions of soccer mums, secondly it makes people flail about like tools without the need for expensive alcohol. There are 22 games specifically for this motion sensitive camera, with 34 titles that utilise its photo functionality.



G-CON 45 - GOOD

When you absolutely positively need to cap a virtual someone and be sure they won't live to spend more time with their virtual families; you should turn to the ludicrously accurate G-Con 45. Whether it's eliminating bad guys during a timely crisis or mowing down cardboard cut-out ninjas at point blank range, the G-Con 45 has you covered with its solid, reliable design.

The standard issue sidearm for discerning gunslingers.

NEGCON - WTF

At some point in the proceedings some genius figured that the twisting/wrapping motion you make when hand washing your undies would be a cool way of steering cars in a videogame - interesting interpretation. Surprisingly, even though it looks like you're choking a chicken when using it (possibly your own) the control experience it offered actually wasn't bad - especially with its revolutionary analogue buttons.



TRANCE VIBRATOR - "BAD"

Not a "bad" controller in the usual derogatory sense, it's more of a shag carpeting, pizza delivery guy, porno scratch guitar kind of baaad. Straight away you've got to be a little suspicious when the product blatantly sports the phrase "vibrator" in its moniker. Released "only in Japan" as an add-on for the pulsing, throbbing beats of *Rez*; it didn't take long for certain types to head on downstairs with it. Ohhhh yeahhhh .



ONLINE

The latest PS3 Network news, online reviews, reader online section and more!

WHAT'S NEW?

The latest PlayStation Store goodies

Accessing overseas PlayStation Stores

It's important to know that you don't have to get by with just the downloads on the Australian PS Store. You can setup overseas profiles on your PS3 and simply sign in to access the extra content available on the US and Hong Kong stores. To do this simply set up a new profile and enter an American or Hong Kong address. This way when you access the store using this profile you will be taken to the overseas stores. What's also cool is that once you start a download from an overseas store, you can switch back to your main Australian profile, start playing a game, and it will continue to download the content you started with a different profile.



Aussie Store

No one could complain about the holiday bounty crammed into the PlayStation Store this month. First up you'll probably wanna grab new demos like *Uncharted: Drake's Fortune*, *Blazing Angels 2*, *Stranglehold* and *Need for Speed ProStreet*. You'd be mad not to have a crack at the 1080p and fully equipped for online play *Tekken 5: Dark Resurrection Online* going for a very reasonable \$29.95. There's also a handful of new cars and tracks available for *MotorStorm* as downloadable content but they're a little pricey. *Folklore* gets a dose of downloadable content of its own too. Trailers are a little thin on the ground this month with a couple of *Ratchet & Clank Future* behind-the-scenes docos and Pixar's *Wall-E* being highlights.



USA/Japan Store

The Yanks only score a handful of highlights ahead of us this month. The biggest new demo is the disappointingly PS2-esque *MX Vs. ATV: Untamed*. Demos of *College Hoops 2K8* and *Toy Home* are worth a look if you're itching for some extra playable content. There are a handful of new Network games (*Aquatopia*, *Operation Creature Feature* and *Everyday Shooter*) and some early downloadable content for *Rock Band* and *NFS ProStreet* but unless you know something we don't you still can't download pay content from the US Store. Don't forget the *Gran Turismo 5 Prologue* demo is still available on the Japan Store.

Juiced 2

Not sweet enough...

Juiced 2: Hot Import Nights' online mode is a tale of two extremes. On the one hand it's certainly robust and well-designed. The online and offline careers are crafted to work in unison, so you can dabble online for a while, continue your career offline and return online at a later stage. The only things that change are your opponents – from CPU ones to human. As we mentioned in the full review, the action is limited to circuit racing and drift racing, but you can also bet on online races – either cash or the pink slip to your ride. You can bet on other races too, ones you're not involved in, just for the cash.

On the other hand though, and this is the kicker, nobody is playing it. We tried on many different occasions to get something decent going and struck out nearly every time. After some serious time finding the right bikini for our busty female avatar and slapping some Starsky & Hutch racing stripes on our newly-purchased Ford Gran Torino we hopped online. On the first few occasions we were completely confused because it looked like



there was one other racer online, so naturally we kept trying to join his/her races. However, the game consistently put the kibosh on our attempts until we realised the one racer online was us. We were the only people playing. Each time we saw the numeral 1 beside an event, it was us. We were trying to join... ourselves. The custom race mode isn't any better.

There are far better ways of playing with yourself. It's a shame too, because this had real potential.

★★

Call of Duty 4

We've found our calling...

If there's anyone out there who doesn't know by now how good *Call of Duty 4* is then they must be an illiterate, deaf, blind, friendless hermit. Admittedly, facing those challenges they'll have a tough time enjoying *COD4* to its full potential, but even so we feel compelled to reiterate the point on the off chance one them is having this article translated. We thought it was so amazing we gave it a 10/10 score. It's the best first-person shooter in this, or any other, universe and you'd be barking mad not to get it. So get it. Now, dammit!

Okay, so you've played through *COD4*'s intense campaign, maybe even on Hardened or Veteran, and you're ready to take your elite skills onto the online battlefield? First up, we'll give you a warning about the one hiccup in *COD4*'s otherwise stellar online mode. The problem is the majority of people playing the games are Americans (we'd hate them if they hadn't created this fine game in the first place) and the problem is that if you're a lone Aussie in a game



being hosted by Yanks then you're going to suffer a little lag. It's far from game-crippling lag but it's enough to ensure the Yanks have a slight advantage in every gun battle.

Assuming you're a big enough man to play at a slight disadvantage or, better yet, you find a game being hosted by Aussies then you'll enjoy a superbly balanced and constantly entertaining multiplayer mode that will add months of fun to *COD4*.

★★★

FYI

Please don't feel left out if we can't add you to our friends list because they max out at 50 and ours are often full.

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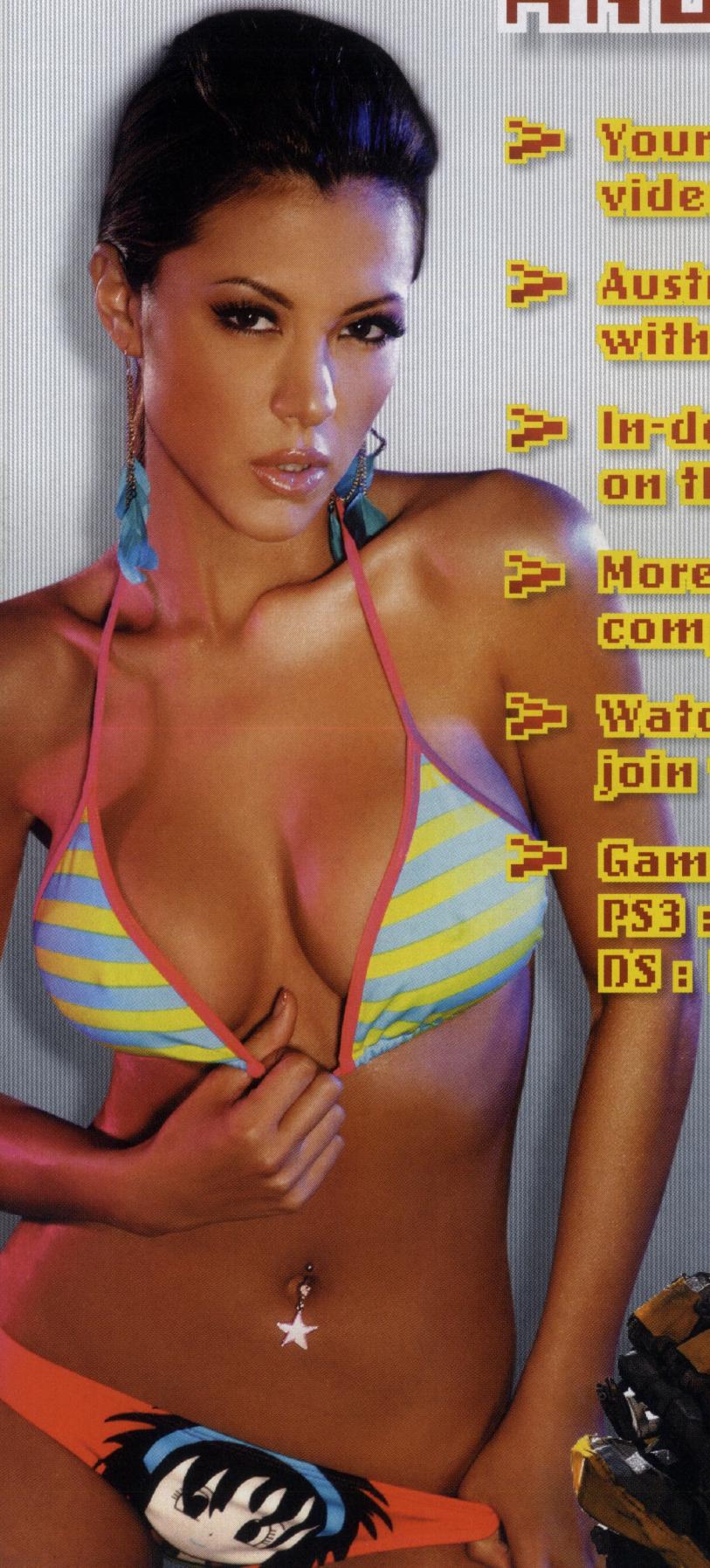
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iriquois – Resistance
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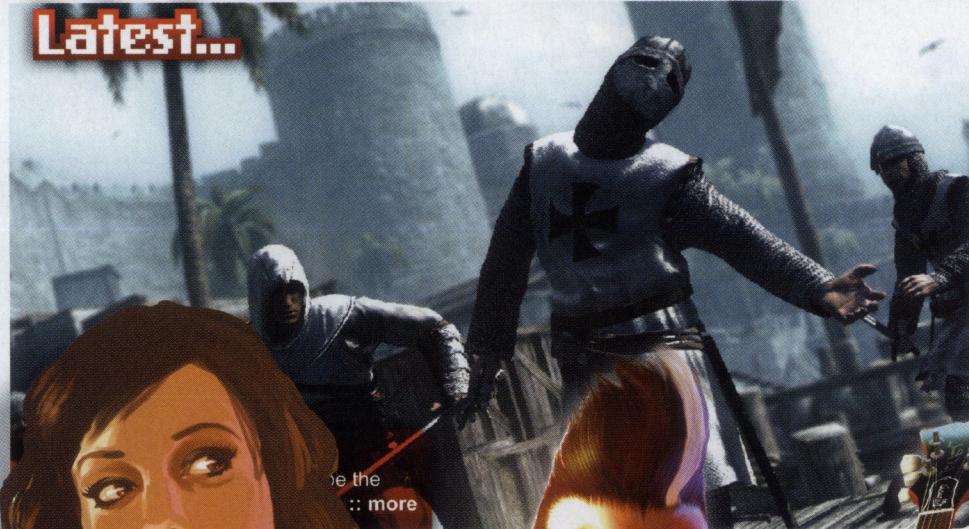
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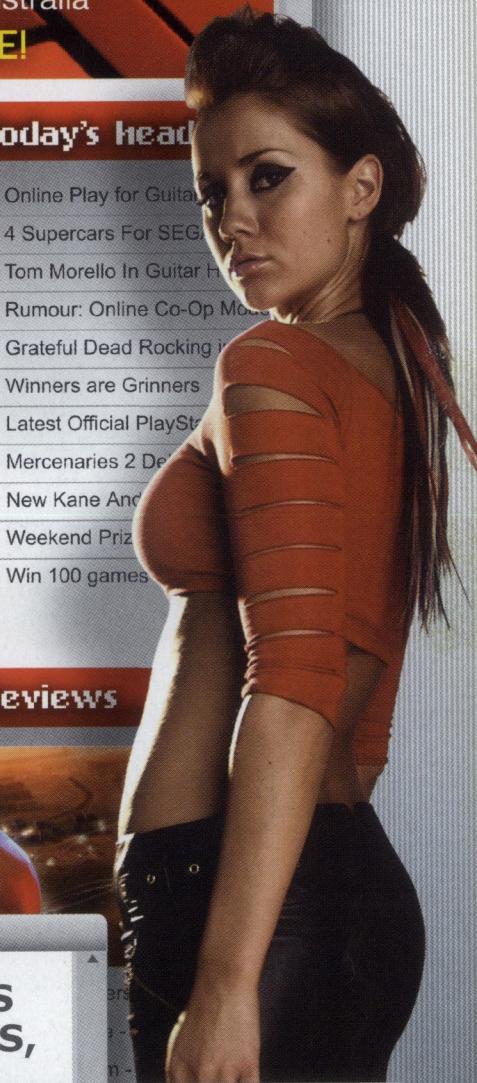
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Reviews

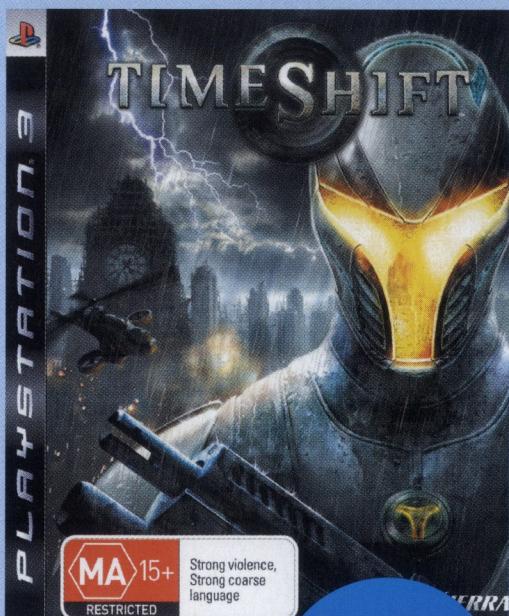
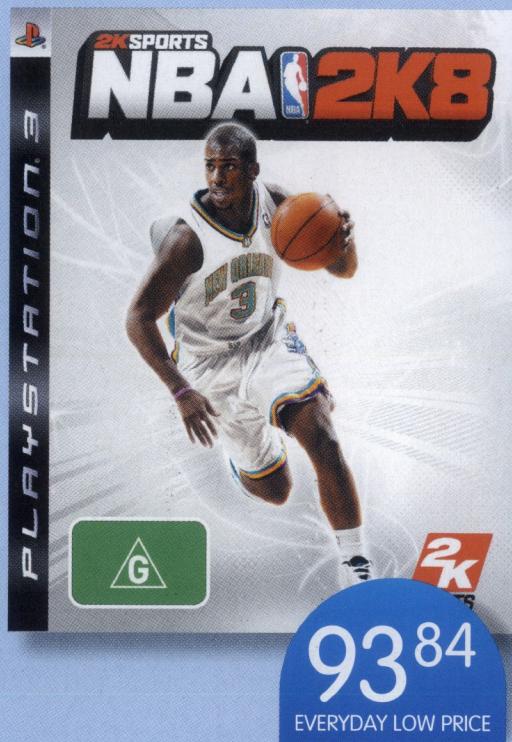
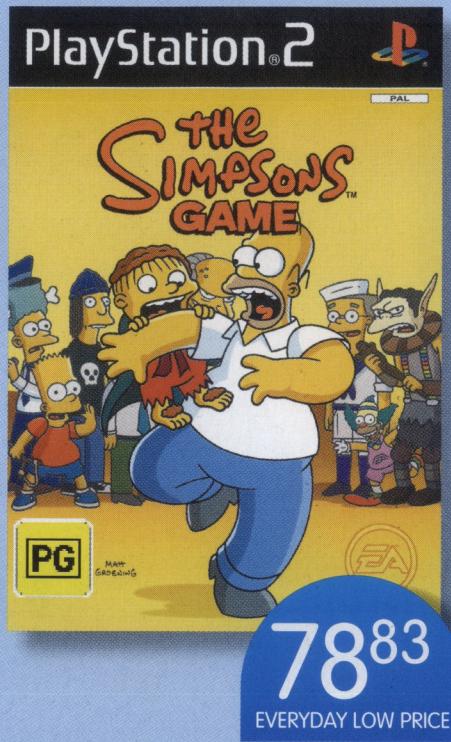
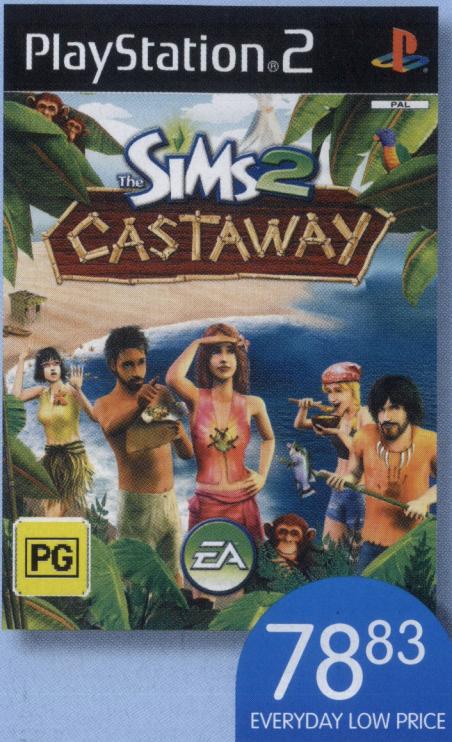


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THIS MONTH'S RELEASES PUT TO THE TEST

REVIEWS

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REVIEW RATINGS

01

Reserved for the very worst that developers have to offer.

Essentially, anything that receives this score has no redeeming qualities whatsoever. A game receiving this score could not possibly be any worse, unless it was broken from the outset (or gave you cancer, or killed your dog). A game that should never have even survived its first pitch – as bad as it gets.

02

A terrible, terrible game. There may be one or two

things about this game that work, or aren't actually broken, but they are so hopelessly outnumbered by the sheer quantity of badness that they basically cease to exist. Maybe it has a clever name, maybe the concept was sound – but virtually every single thing about it is bad beyond belief. Not worth the effort.

03

Very disappointing. A game with this score is fundamentally flawed in a number of extremely vital ways.

There may be one or two things that could've been done somewhat worse than they have been, but for most part it's totally uninspired, boring and unappealing in every way. There are games that are worse, but there's not that many.

04

Poor. There may be parts of this game that are vaguely fun, and it may be robust enough in a few departments,

but the overall package is lacking any significant reason to stick it out. Games receiving this score may show initial promise, or sound good at first, but will be unrefined, undercooked and let down by shoddy execution and poor attention to detail.

05

Mediocre. In the strictest terms, 50% is a pass – just.

Unfortunately, a game receiving this score will have had just as many things go wrong with it as go right, and that really isn't enough to succeed. A game receiving this score will probably be entertaining in parts without excelling anywhere, yet equally sub-par in others without being outright awful.

06

Decent enough, although still lacking a certain something. A game receiving this score will be sound, but will have some fairly glaring faults and your interest will probably wane pretty quickly. It will have a number of limitations that will probably turn off more than a few gamers, but will get just enough right to keep dedicated fans of the genre ploughing through.

07

Good. A robust, fun game that's well worth a look, although will only rarely amaze. A game receiving this score will have more or less accomplished nearly all it set out to do in a decent fashion, but it will have some noticeable problems that prevent it from being as good as it could be. Nevertheless, they generally won't ruin the overall gaming experience.

08

Great. A game receiving this score comes highly recommended. A combination of some odd issues, minor problems or a lack of innovation may hamper it somewhat, but the overall impression it leaves is very positive. Very entertaining, very satisfying and you wouldn't hesitate to recommend it to others. Well ahead of the pack in most departments.

09

Excellent. Outstanding in almost every way.

Some negligible blemishes will just keep it from being held aloft as a true masterpiece, but it is very likely the best in its field. Most elements of this game will be truly remarkable and you'll be hard-pressed to find too many other games of greater quality. An astonishing game that leaves all but the very best behind.

10

Incredible. Everything went right during the creation of this game. A game receiving a perfect 10 does not necessarily mean it is perfect, likely just teasingly close, but to reserve 10s for THE perfect game is pointless. Instead, a 10 represents a game of gobsmacking brilliance, a game that stands high above the rest and a game that you cannot afford to ignore. A masterpiece.

THE OPS AWARDS



The Gold Award
is a rare gem and only to be given to games that score that magic 10/10. This score indicates gaming of simply incredible quality!



The Silver Award
is for games that receive 9/10. If you see this, it's a sign of star quality, indicating that you should buy this game now!



The Bronze Award
is for games that score 8/10. These games are highly recommended and are 100% guaranteed to satisfy.

OPS REVIEW SETUP



We choose to review our games on a super-slick Full HD 1080p 40" Bravia X-series for the best picture possible. This sucker melts eyeballs...

INSIDE...

PS3



SINGSTAR

"My baby don't mess around..." – page 70

PS2



THE SIMPSONS GAME

Pelicans CAN be used to mix cement – page 80

PSP



SYPHON FILTER: LOGAN'S SHADOW

A virus in your pants that doesn't itch – page 84

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- Yu-Gi-Oh! GX Tag Force 2
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PS3 PS2 PSP REVIEW

■ GENRE: PARTY
■ RELEASE: NOW
■ DEVELOPER: SONY
■ DISTRIBUTOR: SONY

■ PLAYERS: 1-8
■ PRICE: \$59.95/\$109.95
■ HD: 1080p
■ WEB: www.singstargame.com

■ BACK STORY: The SingStar series has been a juicy cash cow for Sony, shipping more than 10 million copies in nearly 67 countries. Opinion in the office is divided as to which instalment is the best so far – SingStar Rocks! or SingStar Legends.

INFO BYTE

The My SingStar features, which are free, allow you to build an online profile that will record your best scores and let you upload photos, videos and audio of your performances. The videos are limited to 30 seconds (usually the first chorus) and it won't be for everyone, but we can see this taking off. You can interact with other players by viewing their profiles, rating their content and leaving comments.



P1

Say it ain't so
I will not go

TIME

Thinking a bunch of guys who sing about sex, all the time? Think Blink-182

SINGSTAR

"I said, I gotta get back girl on the love train..."

SingStar. It's the one game you can put on after stumbling home from the pub that everyone you've brought with you can enjoy. It has a lot of things going for it. One, you can still hold a kebab in your spare hand. Two, it's hilarious to watch your wife's best friend leap over the lounge and slur, "Ssssshhhh! This song's all about me!" before spending the rest of the night looking for her second high heel (just us?). Three? Anyone can play – and if you don't, you're no fun and you're not invited to our place.

ALL THE SMALL THINGS

The first next gen instalment, simply titled SingStar, follows the same familiar format. You sing into microphones (the PS2 mics work, but wireless ones are due soon) and are awarded points based on pitch and timing. The original music videos roll in the background while you sing, or by using the new PlayStation Eye you can see yourselves. You can sing solo, duet or battle with a friend, and up to eight can play Pass the Mic, a team game broken up into a series of challenges.

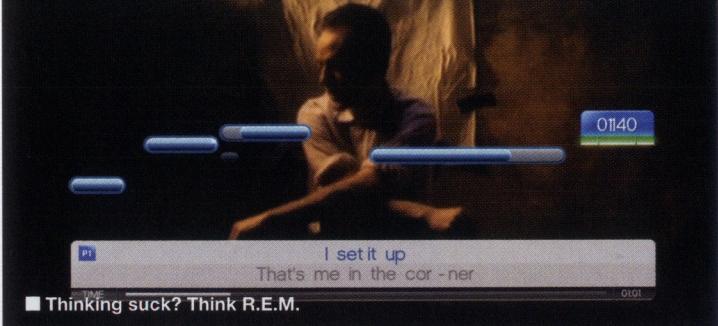
PlayStation.
Official Magazine Awards

BRONZE
AWARD
8/10

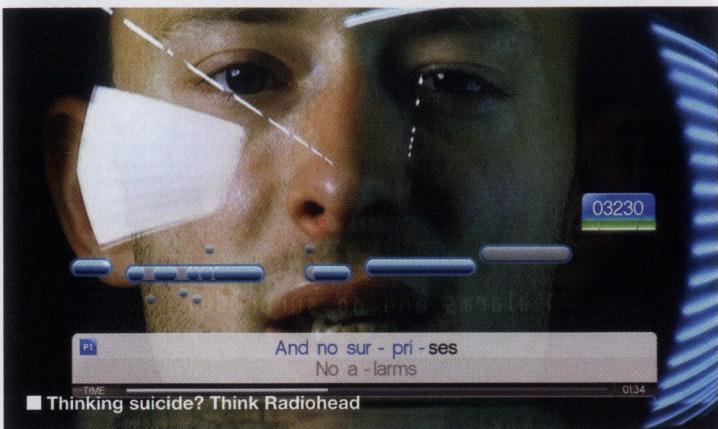
P1

TIME

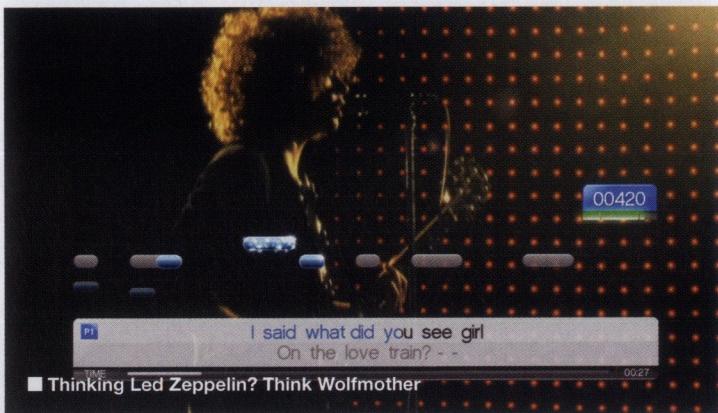
You're tox - ic
I'm slip - pin' un - der



Thinking suck? Think R.E.M.



Thinking suicide? Think Radiohead



Thinking Led Zeppelin? Think Wolfmother

The tracklist is a bit scattershot but there are some highlights, including OutKast's 'Hey Ya', Weezer's 'Buddy Holly', Musical Youth's 'Pass the Dutchie', Blink-182's 'All The Small Things' and Wolfmother's 'Love Train' (confusing, as 'Woman' is the song pumping during the game's opening montage).

The clean new look is nice, and is fully customisable – with various backgrounds and themes available on the disc and more to come via the online SingStore, which is available now.

More to the point, however, the SingStore will allow you to download fresh songs whenever the mood strikes. This is SingStar's biggest bullet point. The SingStore went live on December 6 with 44 songs, and songs will be added regularly. Tracks cost \$2.49 apiece, and you can keep singing while your tracks download in the background – so there'll be no need to pause your party.

NO SURPRISES

We do have some criticisms, however. The eclectic tracklist seems a shade weak compared to some of the better instalments of the SingStar series on PS2 over the past two years, which strikes us a tad odd for such a high profile title. There's no Elvis, always a major downer, and there's a distinct lack of any true anthems – the kind of songs that sweep

across parties and trigger some genuine, arm-in-arm wailing-in-unison. Like 'Khe Sanh'. Or anything by Bon Jovi. Odder still, there are even a few repeated tracks from last gen versions. The Cardigans' 'Lovefool' for instance, has already appeared on SingStar '90s, and U2's 'Beautiful Day', Scissor Sisters' 'I Don't Feel Like Dancing' and the Pussycat Dolls' dire 'Beep' all featured on SingStar Pop Hits. Offering us the choice whether or not to download content we already own sits fine with us – forcing us to shell out for repeats, however, is somewhat of a dick move. It is, of course, likely that the kind of pundits eager to scoop up a copy of SingStar on PS3 already own most, if not all, of the previous ones. We don't really need these songs twice. This is blatant corner-cutting, surely?

Cynics might argue the patchy tracklist is merely an artificial incentive to hop online and supplement your SingStar experience with tunes more to your choosing. They might be right. With admittedly limited decent offline

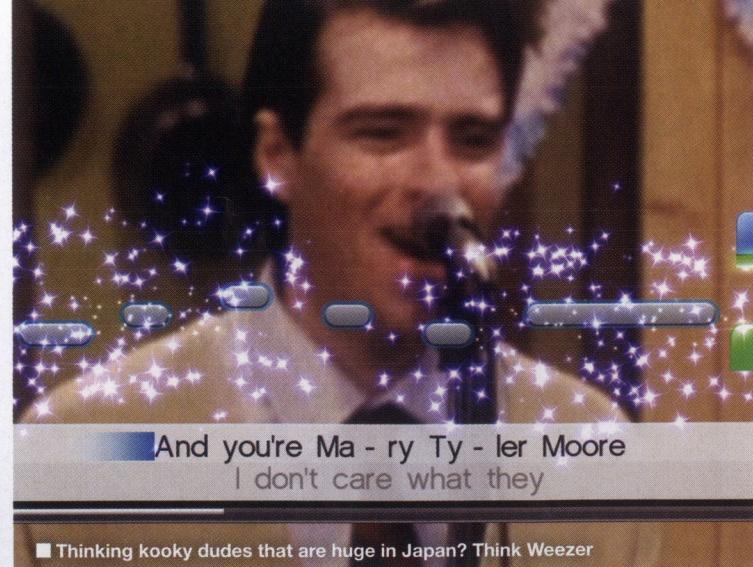
CONS:

- Will last as long as the PS3
- Most accessible game ever
- It could be a little less hip
- Repeated and dud tracks

VERDICT:

The first real series evolution, SingStar will rule Friday nights for the foreseeable future.

OFFICIAL SCORE:
08



Thinking kooky dudes that are huge in Japan? Think Weezer

THE GRATEFUL DEAD

Checking out early is all too common for singers. Stay safe.

Jim Morrison 1943-1971

The Doors
Cause of Death: Probable overdose

Marvin Gaye 1939-1984

Cause of Death: Murdered, shot by his own father

Kurt Cobain 1967-1994

Nirvana
Cause of Death: Suicide

Elvis Presley 1935-1977

Cause of Death: Heart attack on the toilet

Jeff Buckley 1966-1997

Cause of Death: Drowned in the Mississippi River

Michael Hutchence 1960-1997

INXS
Cause of Death: Suicide, or autoerotic asphyxiation?

John Lennon 1940-1980

The Beatles
Cause of Death: Murdered

Freddie Mercury 1946-1991

Queen
Cause of Death: AIDS-related pneumonia

Sid Vicious 1957-1979

The Sex Pistols
Cause of Death: Overdose

Bon Scott 1946-1980

AC/DC
Cause of Death: Acute alcohol poisoning/Death by Misadventure

Ronnie Van Zant 1948-1977

Lynyrd Skynyrd
Cause of Death: Plane crash

Layne Staley 1967-2002

Alice in Chains
Cause of Death: Overdose

Jimi Hendrix 1942-1970

The Jimi Hendrix Experience
Cause of Death: Choked on his own vomit

■ **GENRE:** FIRST-PERSON SHOOTER
■ **RELEASE:** NOW
■ **DEVELOPER:** SABER INTERACTIVE
■ **DISTRIBUTOR:** VIVENDI

■ **PLAYERS:** 1-16
■ **PRICE:** \$99.95
■ **HD:** 720p
■ **WEB:** www.timeshiftgame.com

■ **BACK STORY:** Saber Interactive, a relatively new studio on the scene, is based in St Petersburg Russia. Its biggest game before this was *Will Rock* – a first person shooter in the same vein as *Serious Sam*.

TIMESHIFT

Time waits for no man. Except this man...

Those bloody Wachowski brothers have a lot to answer for. Not only are we still annoyed with their lame "Neo is a blind Jeebus" conclusion to the *Matrix* trilogy; we also hold them personally responsible for corrupting an entire generation of game designers with their admittedly cool bullet-time effect. Nowadays you can't safely press a shoulder button without finding yourself in super sloth-motion, and even the most unlikely of games seem to feature it; whether it's *Rugby League*, *Spyro*, or *Lair*. With *Lair* we thought we were

permanently stuck in bullet-time – until we realised that it was just an optical illusion caused by boredom.

With bullet-time way past its prime, and the fact that the game received a suspiciously large overhaul before it was released, we didn't have the highest of hopes for *TimeShift*. Truth be told, we were all set to use a deliberate typo in the heading (dropping the "f" from *TimeShift*). But as amusing and juvenile as that would have been, we couldn't go through with it. Firstly we'd be castrated and secondly because *TimeShift* isn't *that* bad.

A SUIT WITH PHENOMENAL UNIVERSE-ALTERING ABILITIES – AND ZERO BALL ROOM

TimeShift revolves around two time manipulation suits – an Alpha and a Beta model. Soon after their invention one of the head scientists, Dr. Aiden Krone, murders a group of technicians, suits up in the Alpha model, initiates the laboratory's self-destruct and vanishes into the time stream. Bravely, and with little to no regard for a healthy sperm count, you shoehorn yourself into the skin tight Beta suit and pursue Krone into the



■ "Take a knee boys. Now wait there while I cock this thing..."

INFO BYTE

Before the game's overhaul the original protagonist was a dude called Michael Swift. Saber changed him to an anonymous time suit wearer so players could imagine themselves in the role.



■ Bruce's japes would amuse his squad no end, but one New Year's Eve when he was writing his name in the air with sparklers something terrible happened – something that would change all of their lives, forever



past, thereby surviving the nerd barbecue. You awaken to an alternate past which fuses 1939 industrialism with current day technology – and worse still, Krone has taken charge and is now running the entire show as an iron-fisted dictator.

Unfortunately, that's about all the story you'll be getting with *TimeShift*. The game does include the odd flashback detailing some functions of your suit, but other than that you're just expected to get in there, murderise wave after wave of fascist soldiers and possibly help a random resistance fighter make something explode. Similarly, your character is devoid of name, voice, or personal history and as the game progresses you really only find out two major things about yourself; you're a brilliant physicist in a cool suit fighting to save an enslaved world, and secondly, if there are any lawyers around, your name isn't Gordon Freeman.

Used in combat, your time suit affords you the sporadic ability to pause, slo-mo and rewind the battlefield. This basically means that within two seconds you can go from cowering behind some

disintegrating cover to charging between your paused assailants and systematically executing them all with a pistol. This God-like ability is balanced, however, by a rapidly depleting time gauge which, like your health, takes some time to refresh itself. This is useful because those eggheads didn't have Kevlar in mind when they designed this badboy.

Aside from the scattered moments of coolness, like manipulating time to exterminate platoons and solve the occasional physics based obstacle, *TimeShift* is a vanilla first-person shooter that just ticks all the usual boxes. Vehicle section? Check. On-rails section with mounted gun? Check. Suspiciously sticky grenades? Check. There isn't anything wrong with the action per se; the time manipulation is admittedly fun and does open up some strategic new doors during fire fights, but beyond that *TimeShift* feels like every other FPS you've ever played.

"GREAT SCOTT! THIS IS HEAVY..."

Graphically, the game continues the vanilla swirl, but also yields the occasional choc chip – one of which can be seen

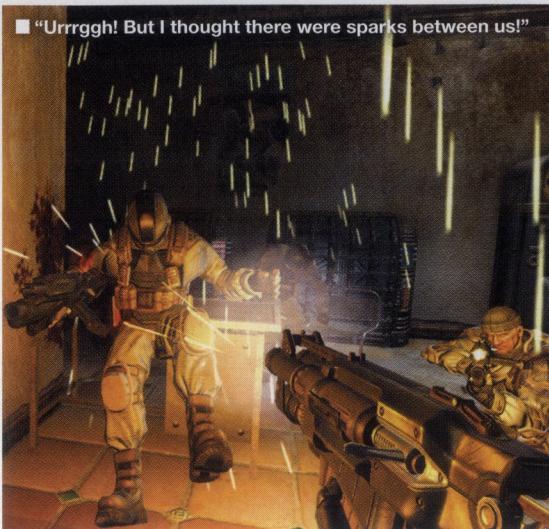
in *TimeShift*'s very first area. As you're scurrying through the dilapidated, oppressive urban housing it starts to rain, the water pooling in beautifully rendered puddles of water. In addition to this impressive visual effect Saber has also included some small touches that emphasise the feeling of being strapped into a high tech suit. Glancing upward your visor becomes slick with the downpour and if you're in close proximity to a soldier when he cops it you'll receive a face full of red stuff. Also, if your health is precariously low your vision will ebb and blur in a disturbing display of chaos and agony – which works wonders in reinforcing a sense of impending doom.

TimeShift is at its best, however, when you're watching the proverbial crap hit the fan in dreamy slow motion. Whether it's nailing a money shot on a hovering jetpack guy and seeing him lazily rain down in chunky kibbles or witnessing the rhythmic cha-cha and subsequent back flip of an enemy perforated with your trusty assault rifle, slo-motion truly has the power to make anything look cool.

While it's true that the visuals can

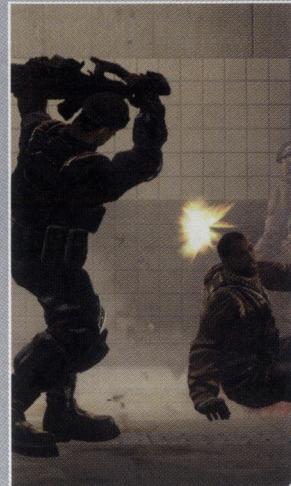


■ "Hold on a second, hold on a second – I just wanna make sure I've got this right. Are you telling me *none* of you *idiots* brought marshmallows?"



CAN I BORROW THAT FOR A SECOND? CHEERS

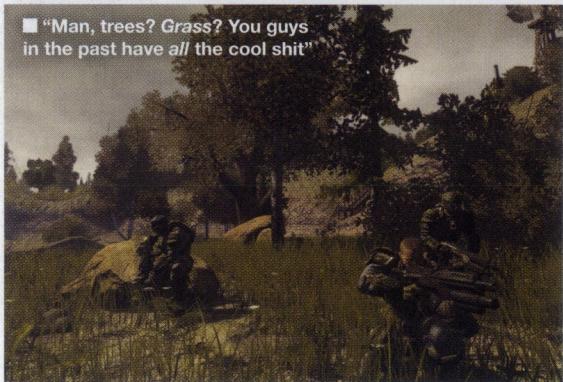
Assault rifle – \$560. Experimental time traveling suit – \$4.2 billion. Pausing time, stealing some guy's gun, wiping out his six buddies with it and watching him crap his pants when regular time resumes – priceless. One of the cooler moments of *TimeShift*, pilfering someone's gun can lead to a few different responses from the AI. They'll do one of the following things: beg for mercy, dive for another gun, or ask themselves, "How the hell did he do that?"



■ "If I could turn back time, if I could find a way – I'd take back those words that hurt you and you'd stay"

"While we're always going to dish out generous heapings of love to any game that lets us dismember things, what we appreciate more is some consistency with our ultra-violence."

■ "Man, trees? Grass? You guys in the past have *all* the cool shit"



**PFFFFT... TIME TRAVEL?
- TELL 'EM THEY'RE DREAMIN'**

So will sci-fi technology like time manipulation ever appear? Probably not, but history is chock-a-block full of naysayers that greatly underestimated the power of genius, demand and invention.

"Heavier-than-air flying machines are impossible." – Lord Kelvin, president, Royal Society, 1895

"I think there is a world market for maybe five computers." – Thomas Watson, chairman, IBM, 1943

"Everything that can be invented has been invented." – Charles H. Duell, commissioner, US Office of Patents, 1899



pack a bit of a punch, unfortunately it's not all chunky kibbles and cha-chas. While we're always going to dish out generous heapings of love to any game that lets us dismember things, what we appreciate more is some consistency with our ultra-violence. Unloading two shotgun barrels into somebody's unfortunate face won't shear anything off and lobbing a well placed grenade into a platoon usually just sends them cart wheeling. It seems that the only way to liberate limbs from bodies (other than using an incendiary crossbow bolt) is to catch them strolling past an explosive red barrel, which is somewhat of a shafting.

We're also disappointed with the untapped potential readily available via *TimeShift*'s more or less unique premise. Given that you're chasing an evil genius through time who rewrites things to serve his nefarious will you'd expect to be relentlessly pursuing him in and out of a few different, bizarro versions of reality – like a world where the sport of speed cup stacking is useful and cool, or a dimension where sock puppets are our unquestioned masters. Think about it; the possibilities could and should have been varied and exciting. Unfortunately this isn't the case, because for most of the game

you'll just be sludging through the same oppressive/depressive paint-by-numbers environments you've seen in every other FPS you've ever played.

ROADS? WHERE WE'RE GOING WE DON'T NEED... ROADS!

TimeShift's multiplayer mode is as solid and robust as the main game, but unfortunately it's also just as run of the mill. The only really interesting addition is the time-altering grenades. These charges are an area-of-effect weapon that slow down your hapless foes to pensioner speed. These time grenades admittedly do offer some fun potential, but this wears off after the third time someone slows you down, casually cruises over and melees you in the groin to death before skipping away. It can be quite amusing when you're the groin melee-er rather than the groin melee-ee, but we found players will tend to rely solely on frantically spamming you with time grenades. This just tends to foster a curious love/hate relationship that will have you sometimes wishing there weren't any molasses-inducing time weapons at all. But if they were removed, what would you have? Generic weaponry, girly melee attack animations and the same old tired multiplayer feel. Not much.

All said and done; *TimeShift* is a solid but unoriginal shooter. The inspired addition of time control does offer some new combat options, but in the puzzle situations Saber has made it context sensitive to the point of it being a "solve-problem-for-me-now" button – which all but ruins any challenge this game had to offer. *TimeShift* suffers greatly from a lack of any real story (speaking from years of hands-on experience, your average porno flick features a plot deeper than this) which makes it feel like you're persisting for very little reason and is also a shade unrewarding. But we digress.

If you buy this game to have some good old fashioned fun – it will deliver. If, however, you buy *TimeShift* thinking it's going to be an evolutionary step forward for shooters you'll probably want to rewind time to the moment before your wallet came out – so you can pile drive yourself. **Adam Mathew**

PROS:

- A new take on bullet-time
- Slow-mo looks beautiful

CONS:

- Minimal narrative hurts
- Been-there-done-that levels

VERDICT:

A solid attempt at a time-bending shooter that doesn't quite reach 88 miles per hour.

OFFICIAL SCORE:
06

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CAMERAS

Christmas 2007 \$8.95

153

The Gadget Magazin

305

XMAS
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■ **GENRE:** ADVENTURE
■ **RELEASE:** NOW
■ **DEVELOPER:** UBISOFT TIWAK
■ **DISTRIBUTOR:** UBISOFT

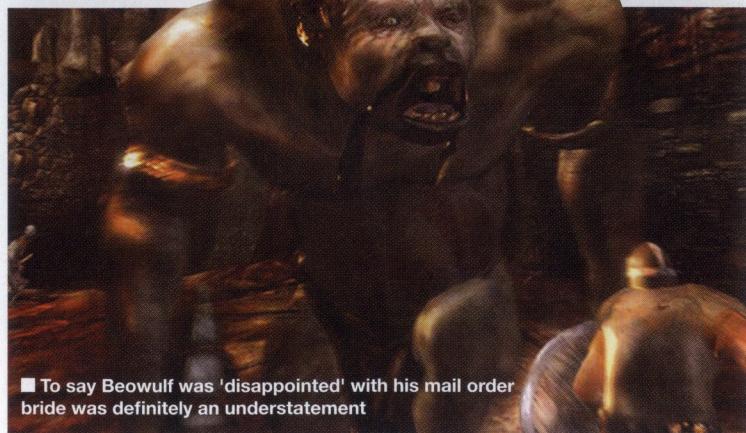
■ **PLAYERS:** 1
■ **PRICE:** \$119.95
■ **HD:** 720p
■ **WEB:** www.ubi.com

■ **BACK STORY:** Games based on movies, for the most part, suck long and hard. There are a few notable exceptions... none of which we can think of just now... so, erm, why don't you go ahead and read about this fat mess.

"That gives you an idea of how very not groovy *Beowulf* is. It has the dubious honour of ticking almost every videogame cliché we all know and loathe."



■ "HEAVE... HO! Keep up the good work fellas. I'd get in and help, but I just washed and straightened my hair"



■ To say Beowulf was 'disappointed' with his mail order bride was definitely an understatement

BEOWULF

Mostly filler... with a little bit of killer

The origins of *Beowulf* the game are long and winding. Well, not *that* long and winding but more complex than the usual movie-to-game translation. See the game is based on the movie – *Beowulf* – a completely CGI animated affair from Robert Zemeckis. Now Zem-Zem as he likes to be called (maybe) has brought us some good stuff, but he also unleashed the horrific 'family' film *The Polar Express*. Anyone who got the warm tingles in that so-called kid's film is more bent than Lindsay Lohan on New Year's Eve. The eyes of the characters are so cold, dead and lifeless they make *The Exorcist* look like the friggin' Teletubbies.

SPEAKING OF LONG AND WINDING...

But we digress. The winding bit is that the movie is based on the 'epic poem' of the same name. Now anyone who had to study that bastard long missive will know it's not exactly an action-filled, roller coaster ride. So liberties have obviously

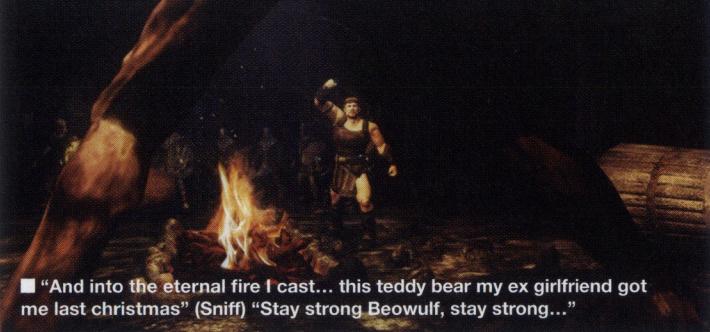
been taken with the movie. Fine. Roll out ninety plus minutes of CGI hack and slash. It might be great. We haven't seen it. What we have done is play the game and to be honest... we'd prefer to read the epic poem.

EWWWW, POEMS?

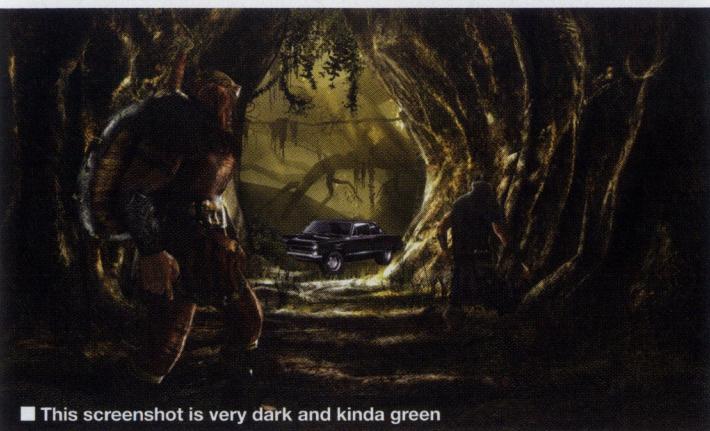
Exactly. That gives you an idea of how very not groovy *Beowulf* is. It has the dubious honour of ticking almost every videogame cliché we all know and loathe. For a start the rather sexy-looking CGI from the movie is in no way represented in the ugly, jaggy graphics of this game. Oh, sure there are moments when you pull off a particularly savage kill or gut a sea monster that get a pass – but they don't look much better than *God of War* and for a PS3 game that's pretty bad.

WHAT ELSE ARE YOU GOING TO WHINE ABOUT?

Oh, lots. Secondly, but most importantly, the story is pure, unadulterated arse. There are moments that obviously expand



■ "And into the eternal fire I cast... this teddy bear my ex girlfriend got me last christmas" (Sniff) "Stay strong Beowulf, stay strong..."



■ This screenshot is very dark and kinda green



■ This screenshot is very dark and very red

on plot points in the movie, but between these mildly diverting boss battles and stabby-stabby bits is a great deal of wandering. And not fun wandering – just sort of killing time until the next fight. The environments look horrible with textures that range from blurry to looks-like-a-bashed-crab. Actually speaking of crabs – get used to them. You spend most of the first levels in some asinine race with some dude, sporadically killing big crabs – the kind of lame enemies that peppered the ponds of *Oblivion*. But in *Oblivion* they were just there to kill and get some more experience. In *Beowulf* they're more prevalent than the contents of drunken bogan's undies. Sure you can pull off some special moves – but where's the satisfaction in plunging your sword deep into... a bloody appetiser?

SURELY IT'S NOT ALL... CRAB-TASTIC?

No, you've got us there. As the game progresses you go from fighting crabs to killing random, wandering gangs of Vikings. Or hippies. It's hard to tell. They're usually dispatched pretty easily as Beowulf is massively overpowered. He's got this blue energy which seems to be from the good fairy (or similar) and some orange rage energy which is like demonic steroids. Either way you are a mighty fighter and even the arch nemesis

of the piece Grendel gets bitch slapped in your first encounter with him. Then through a series of tedious cut-scenes you're told you have to finish him off and kill his mum. Fine – we like killing stuff. But then you're off in the snow, bumping into invisible walls and being blocked off at most turns by rocks Beowulf should be able to lift and tree stumps he should be able to cleft in twain.

ARE THERE ANY REDEEMING FEATURES?

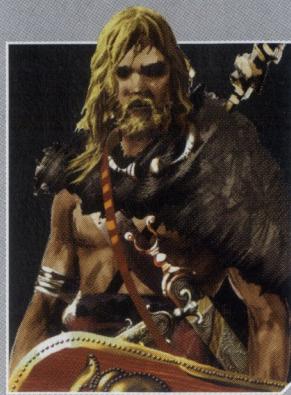
Sure. The fighting is fun and you can grab your enemies and beat them into bloody pulps... but even ultra violence gets dull when you're fighting the same foe over and over. This brings us to the game's biggest crime: the singing mini-game. Soon into the game you'll be asked to man a ship across a raging sea. Do you row or steer the boat in anyway? Nup. What you do is watch this weird yellow circle and, like a puzzle game, press the right button at the right time. The choices are usually between **Ⓐ** and **Ⓑ**. If timed



■ "BEGONE foul harpy! Ah Mrs. Hagar, sorry! I mistook you for a beast on account of your hideous visage"

VIKINGS ARE THE NEW NINJAS. THERE. WE SAID IT!

We'd like to welcome Vikings into the pantheon of stuff we kind of like but also mercilessly take the piss out of. You're joining ninjas and pirates and monkeys, Vikings, so feel proud. It's good to see the bearded man getting some game time. Everyone knows blokes with beards are awesome and erm... can start fires with their minds!



PROS:

- Big, chunky, gory
- The big battles are nice...

CONS:

- Lots of tedious slogging
- Why are they singing? Argh!

VERDICT:

Sadly doomed from the start. Why the singing? And why does it look so drab?

OFFICIAL SCORE:

06

■ GENRE: SPORTS
■ RELEASE: NOW
■ DEVELOPER: VISUAL CONCEPTS
■ DISTRIBUTOR: 2K

■ PLAYERS: 1-6
■ PRICE: \$99.95
■ HD: 720p
■ WEB: www.2ksports.com

■ BACK STORY: 2K has produced the best basketball games of the last several years. Born out of Sega, the series has been picked up by Take Two Interactive and now does war against EA in a bid to create the best sports titles available.

NBA 2K8

"Shot on the buzzer! LeBron shoots...HE SCORES. HE'S BEING MOBBED BY STRIPPING CHEERLEADERS...!"

Move over Michelangelo, the basketball genre is seeing a renaissance spurred on by two competing companies who hold more cash than Tasmania. While EA's *LIVE* series kept both feet in the court this year with a great offering that slammed down easy thrills, 2K Sports has retaliated with the ring-ripping brilliance that is *NBA 2K8*.

Like a lap dance, it's all about the movement. One of the worst things about *2K7* was how poorly your AI team mates bombed bucket after bucket on the fast break. Often you'd pass the ball up to a

charging point guard who was way ahead of the opposition's defence only for the blighter to stop on the spot as he caught the ball while the D caught up and put out his fire. That's changed. Passing to a charging man, either on the counter or driving the lane, will see them catch and shoot in one velvety motion. The new 'Get Free' button accentuates these shenanigans. Now when the D bogs down your team you can hit this button to give them a kick in the ass and have them sprint into space. During our time controlling the Miami Heat, we were often

able to weasel our way close to the key with a top ball handler like Williams and then dish off to a rampaging Shaq who'd bury the ball home with a two-handed slam. It's just simply how we roll.

Apart from being able to put some fire in the pants of your team there are a host of new off-the-ball controls that'll suit casual players who couldn't be arsed wading through all the playbooks. Now you can switch control to a player not in possession of the rock to run into space, offer a pick or stretch the defence. While it's not something you'll use all the time,

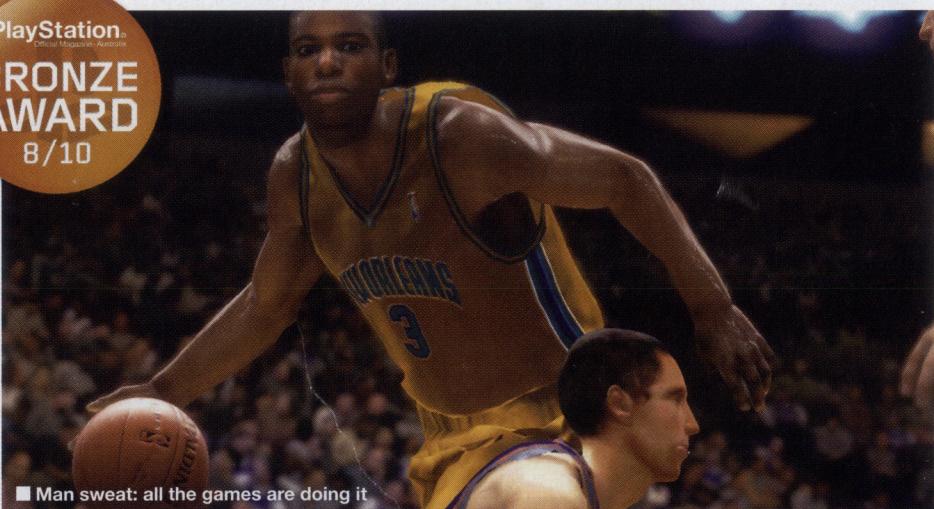
it's a handy feature that keeps your attack options fresh.

On the other hand, if you're out to understand the game better and start making heads and tails of the playbooks the game offers a neat little set of training wheels to take your game to the next level. Now when you call a play with the digital pad, icons will appear on screen to show you what position your team mates have to get into and how the ball should be passed around. A portal into the science of the sport itself – it's a great way to shape your game.

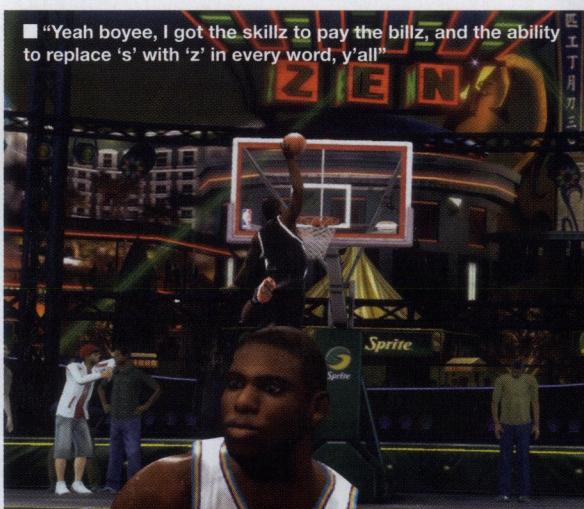
PlayStation[®]
Official Magazine - Australia

**BRONZE
AWARD**

8/10



■ Man sweat: all the games are doing it

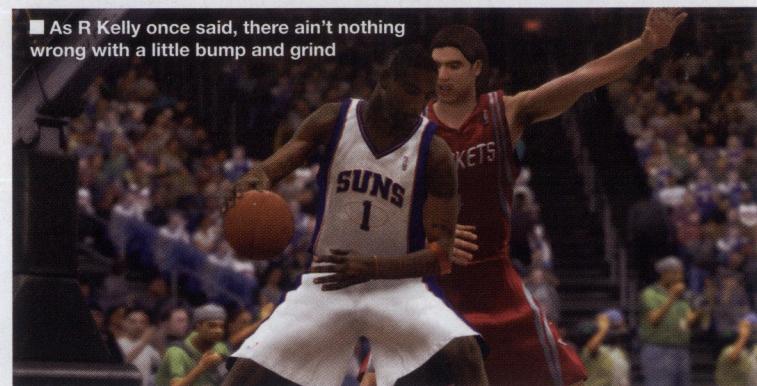
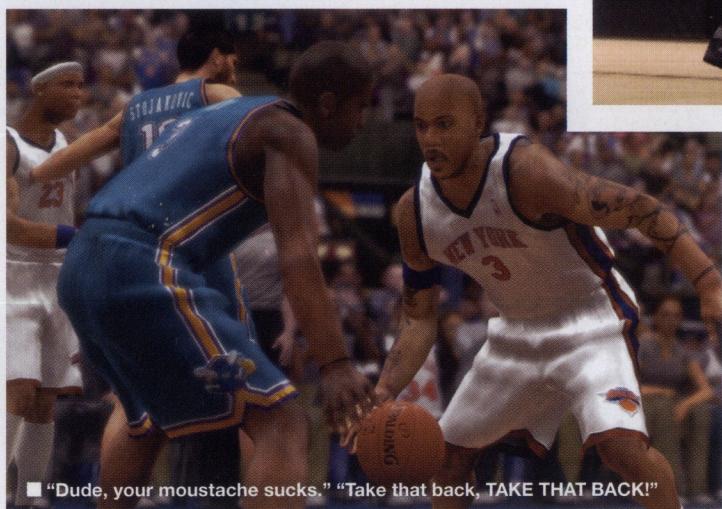
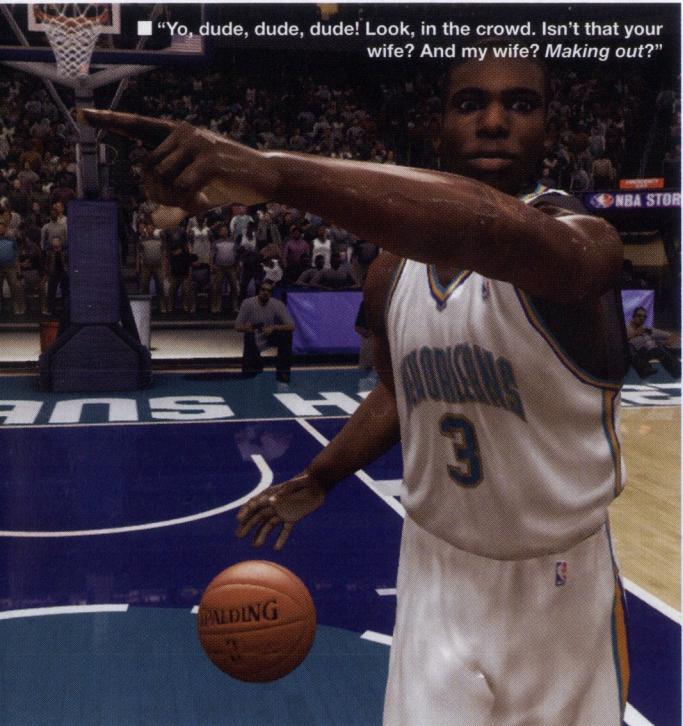


■ "Yeah boyee, I got the skillz to pay the billz, and the ability to replace 's' with 'z' in every word, y'all"



INFO BYTE

Want to edit your own b-ball highlights? You can use the game's new Reelmaker feature and use slow-mo effects to make your dunks seem better than they actually are.



This all leads us back to the second big improvement of *NBA 2K8*: the offence. See, while the 2K series has always erred on the side of realism, it went a step too far last year with the unnerving amount of missed lay-ups and field goals players had to endure. It seemed that the developer's argument was, "Well, they don't always sink them in the real thing, so why should they on the PlayStation?" Fortunately since then they've obviously realised, either through playing the game themselves or from the bloody body parts they received in their mail, that pulling off a mean play during a tight game and then having a shooter like Bryant miss a three-foot field goal isn't good for a gamer's health. So things have changed on that front. Now if you've got an open shot and are using a good shooter, there's a fair greater chance he'll sink the bucket. While you still won't bag every rock in 2K8, the subtle tweaks are instantly appreciated.

Now let's talk cosmetics. While we usually don't make a habit of 'checking out' basketball players, the sheer detail 2K has packed in here has meant we haven't been able to keep our eyes off these lanky rim bandits. While the faces still look a bit goofy in comparison to

those seen in *NBA LIVE 08*, they're a massive step up from last year's effort. Textures and animations on the other hand are off the chart. Witnessing b-ball flavour of the month LeBron James leap through a forest of arms and tomahawk down a massive jam will kick-start the kinky rap soundtrack in your head and have you seeing dollar signs.

Then there are all the other bits and pieces that mix together to form a tasty treat more than the sum of its parts. We're talking mainly about the spectacular crowd. Sure, they're not as detailed as the players themselves, but they're damn well good enough and their coke-fuelled frenzy during a close match feels like it could tear down the stadium roof.

Apart from the on-screen razzmatazz and sculpted gameplay, as usual, *NBA 2K8* packs in every type of game mode permutation and combination known in

gamedom. The new Association mode is back and this time forces you to consider your players' personality types to help keep the suckers in prime form. The new NBA Blacktop (which replaces last year's lame 24/7 mode) features a bunch of street ball games and the new Slam Dunk Competition (see 'Don't Fake the Funk'). Oh, yeah, and online is here in full force allowing you to take your skillz up against other NBA dawgs in a range of ranked and non-ranked exhibitions and tournaments. Boo-shaka-laka!

There's not much to complain about here, save the fact that 2K8 doesn't do anything extraordinary to wrangle in non-basketball fans. With college boy good looks, athletic animation, buffed up on-court thrills and plenty of game modes to keep you playing for months, it's the only option for fans looking to hit the court with their fingers. **James Ellis**

PROS:

- The jams, the big shots – it's all here, big mama!

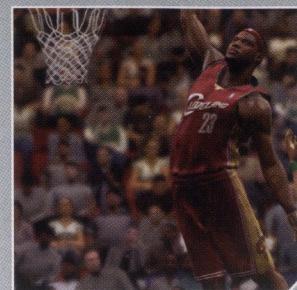
CONS:

- *NBA Live 08* provides some stiff comp for this sucker...

VERDICT:

Has come a long way. Not as pretty as *LIVE* but more in-depth.

OFFICIAL
SCORE:
08



DON'T FAKE THE FUNK

By far the coolest new game mode on offer is the Slam Dunk competition. Offering its own unique controls you take a star ball banger and strive to pull off the deepest aerial jives this side of Harlem. It's tricky to get the hang of initially, but once you get the basics you can begin work on some of the game's more challenging dunks and include props, like cars, to leap over on your way to the ring.

PS3 PS2 PSP REVIEW

■ GENRE: PLATFORMER
■ RELEASE: NOW
■ DEVELOPER: EA REDWOOD SHORES
■ DISTRIBUTOR: EA

■ PLAYERS: 1-2
■ PRICE: \$89.95
■ HD: 576i
■ WEB: www.ea.com/simpsons



THE SIMPSONS GAME

"I gotta go Moe, my damn wiener kids are listening"

The Simpsons Game is a self-referential, satirical spoof on videogames in general. When the Simpsons become self-aware inside their own videogame they develop a number of superpowers and set about battling their way through 30 or so zany levels.

Moving away from the jarring and problematic 3D visuals of the past few *Simpsons* games, *The Simpsons Game* uses a neat cel-shaded look that gives the illusion of 2D, thus remaining faithful to the show. It's a bit jaggy on PS2, but it gets the job done.

However, strip away the surface and you're left with very little – the game itself is extremely basic. It's really

just a very simple beat 'em up with a bit of rudimentary jumping and puzzle solving. Unfortunately, there are some considerable differences between the PS3 and the PS2 version – most notably that this one does not include the large, open-world map of Springfield that acts as a hub for the levels in the PS3 version. The camera is also worse, and rotating

it is often impossible thanks to the fact it tends to get trapped on pieces of scenery and refuses to budge. There also seems to be a serious amount of button lag in the PS2 version, which can be a trifle frustrating to say the least.

That said, the rock-solid sense of humour and its unique perspective save it from total mediocrity. **▲ Luke Reilly**

PROS:

- Great twist on the world of games, genuinely funny

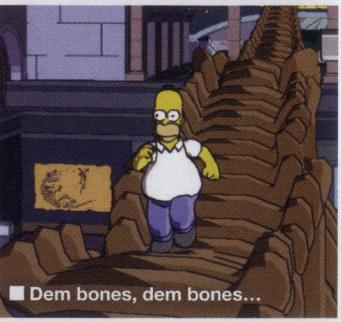
CONS:

- Uncooperative camera, and seems to lack new features

VERDICT:

Not the suckiest bunch of suck that ever sucked, but needed more polish.

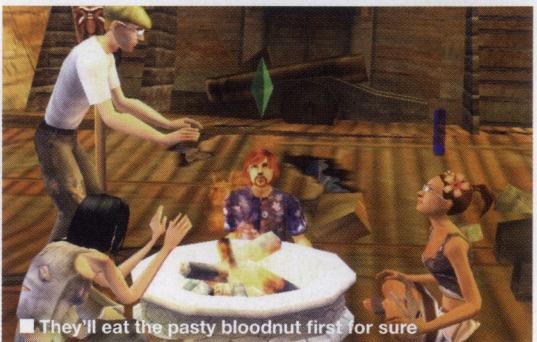
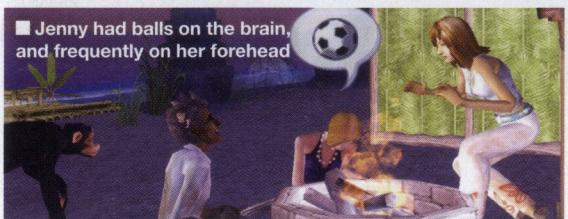
OFFICIAL SCORE:
06



PS3 PS2 PSP REVIEW

■ GENRE: SIMULATION
■ RELEASE: NOW
■ DEVELOPER: MAXIS
■ DISTRIBUTOR: EA

■ PLAYERS: 1
■ PRICE: \$79.95
■ HD: 576i
■ WEB: www.thesims.com



THE SIMS 2 CASTAWAY

Want to be shipwrecked with both Jessica Alba and Heidi Klum? Make it so

Talk about wish fulfilment. The opening minutes of *The Sims 2 Castaway* sees you create a gallery of crewmates destined to be your island buddies after your ship goes down the loo loo in a storm. Jessica, Heidi, Orlando – whatever perverted oyster you want to crack open, you can. Unfortunately this will also prove to be the highlight of your time with this EA cash magnet.

There's no question it's based on a great premise. Instead of being stuck in a house, school or any other boring-ass building you and your sims must go all *Survivor* as you strive to keep them alive, locate other crews, adventure about, and construct a sea-worthy vessel to

eventually depart the island for good.

While it all sounds cool, when you get down to the dirty business of playing the game a crucial nasty leaps up and latches onto your love spuds. It's just so damn slow! While *Sims* vets will be familiar with the ability to fast forward time throughout the myriad tiresome animations (which is nauseating enough as it is), *The Sims*

2 Castaway adds another weight to the chain and constantly loads every time you access a menu function. If you want a game that can put you to sleep in the middle of the day, this is it.

If you've never played a *Sims* game, this is not the version to introduce you to the phenomenon that levered games to the masses. **▲ James Ellis**

PROS:

- Nicely presented menus, and some great ideas

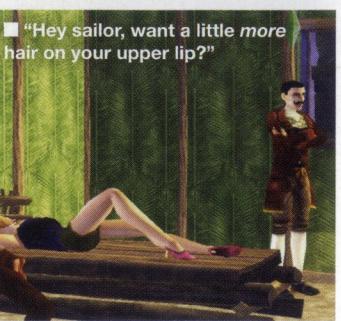
CONS:

- Plays like a drowning whale, spluttering to death in slo mo

VERDICT:

The Sims 2 Castaway should probably stay stranded. For *Sim-a-philes* only.

OFFICIAL SCORE:
05





Mild fantasy
themes and
violence

Download the demo from PlayStation Network now.

www.Folklore-game.com

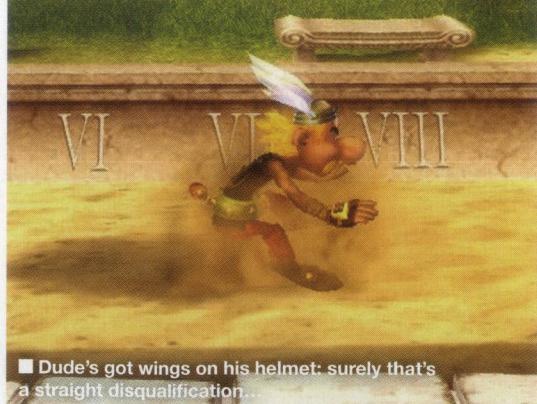
PLAYSTATION 3



PS3 PS2 PSP REVIEW

■ GENRE: PLATFORMER
■ RELEASE: NOW
■ DEVELOPER: ESTRANGES
■ DISTRIBUTOR: ATARI

■ PLAYERS: 1-2
■ PRICE: \$29.95
■ HD: 576i
■ WEB: www.atari.com.au



ASTERIX AT THE OLYMPICS

Old Gaul saying: When in Rome... headbutt them

Romans, they've given so much to society; a counting system for the *Rocky* sequels, Roman blinds, Caesar salads, the aqueduct and the humble orgy. But, while we're huge fans of their work, we just can't resist using Asterix, Obelix and Dogmatix to beat the living snot out of them.

Asterix and the gang are out to help Lovestorix by entering into the Olympics to win over a princess's affections. For the most part the game is your standard platforming fare: collect stuff, unlock combos to wail on Romans, find the switch, so on and so forth. To make things more interesting there's a two-player co-operative option and eight

Olympic events to win, including long jump, foot races, tug of war, hammer throw and javelin.

The game is a decent effort for the PS2. Although a touch blurry; the vibrant colours and the quirky animations of the protagonists do a splendid job of immersing you into the comical Roman-punching-world of the Gauls.

Asterix is a passable platformer with some decent Olympic mini-games that should keep you amused after it's finished – until the excessive button mashing mutates your favourite gaming hand into "the claw". Unfortunately the comedy is mostly Dad joke-ish, apart from a stellar Zidane headbutt scene and a character called Watchadix. **Adam Mathew**

PROS:

- Visuals do the comics justice
- Olympic events are fun

CONS:

- Not that funny...
- Gets fairly repetitive

OFFICIAL SCORE:

05

VERDICT:

Fans of the comic/movie will be pleased, but for everyone else it's just passable.



PS3 PS2 PSP REVIEW

■ GENRE: PLATFORM
■ RELEASE: NOW
■ DEVELOPER: RED TRIBE
■ DISTRIBUTOR: WARNER BROS. INTERACTIVE

■ PLAYERS: 1-2
■ PRICE: \$49.95
■ HD: 576i
■ WEB: www.looneytunes.warnerbros.com

LOONEY TUNES: ACME ARSENAL

We found the weapons of mass destruction

One would think that a game that entices you with the thought of an entire arsenal of Acme toys at your disposal and a large playable cast of your favourite childhood heroes sounds like a pretty good idea right? If only.

What use is an arsenal when the last thing you want to do is fight? The combat in *Acme Arsenal* is a never-ending cycle of frustration and pointlessness. As you prance around the level you'll soon come across floating green vials called Illidium Q-37. These shiny things power up your melee attacks, reducing the amount of whacks to kill something from about 50 to something a little more favourable.

So now that you're all hulked up and ready to get down and dirty, you approach a robot and immediately take a hit and watch in a mix of shock and horror as your hard earned Illidium as well as your health plummets.

We can tell you there's nothing more fulfilling than getting into a fight that makes future fighting more frustrating.

Unfortunately, your so-called arsenal isn't much better. Actually it's worse. With a seemingly endless pool of ideas available to them, what's resulted is a pretty unoriginal collection of toys and that's assuming you can grab them in the first place (and they're not falling through the scenery, out of reach). To make things even worse, the targeting is terrible and it's often a lot easier to ditch the gimmick and return to slugging it out.

Even when you're not fighting, you're still engaged in your own personal war with the deplorable camera as you find yourself taking leaps of faith to clear platforms often ending in your demise. Sadly that's all, folks. **Bobby Peters**



PROS:

- Genuinely funny scripting
- Watch Bugs get beat up

CONS:

- The combat is horrible
- ...and the camera is worse

VERDICT:

Nothing can save this game. The best parts are the outtakes during the credits.

OFFICIAL SCORE:

04

TRIBAL COUNCIL

We chatted to Redtribe CEO, Chris Moseley.

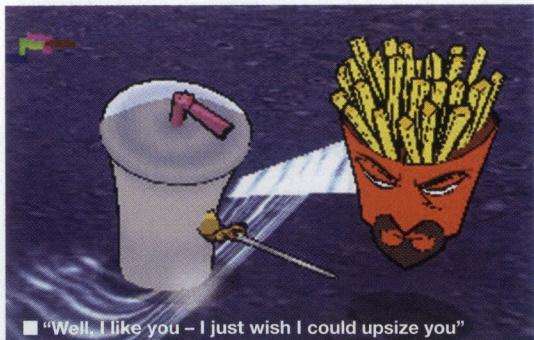
OPS: What made you decide to design *Acme Arsenal* for PS2 rather than PS3?

CM: Good question. When we first started working on *Acme Arsenal* there was a feeling that the PS3 might appeal to a more adult-oriented market. PS2 is a well-established market for this kind of game. *LTA* is primarily a licensed kids title. We would love to bring it to the PS3 next.

OPS: In terms of your development, with the PS2 being seven years old, is this a benefit because you know the console really well or a challenge because it's such old hardware?

CM: There are significant challenges making a game that runs on next-gen consoles and also a PS2. Luckily we have had years of experience working with the PS2 hardware and this has enabled us to get the most out of the machine.

In a way you get a next-gen experience on previous-gen hardware. We even added some next gen type effects using old school techniques.



■ GENRE: RACING-SPORTS-ACTION ■ PLAYERS: 1-2
■ RELEASE: NOW ■ PRICE: \$29.95
■ DEVELOPER: CREAT STUDIOS ■ HD: 576i
■ DISTRIBUTOR: RED ANT ■ WEB: www.creatstudios.com



AQUA TEEN HUNGER FORCE ZOMBIE NINJA PRO-AM

Say what now?

Zombies? Ninjas? Golf? *Aqua Teen Hunger Force* *Zombie Ninja Pro-Am* (subsequently referred to with the wonderfully unpronounceable acronym *ATHFZNP*) is an action, racing... golf game based on the cult [adult swim] cartoon about the non-adventures of Frylock (a carton of fries) Master Shake (a milkshake) and Meatwad (a meatball).

ATHFZNP sees the trio take on Jersey Pines, "South Jersey's most prestigious and exclusive public golf course."

The golf aspect is rudimentary to say the least (in fact, every aspect is rudimentary). *ATHFZNP* features a button-

activated swing-timer, activated with \otimes . Hit \otimes to start it, \otimes to set it and \otimes to stop it. It takes some time to get used to the fact the bar slows down when it reapproaches the sweet spot (which initially makes the whole process a bit awkward) but it becomes an absolute doddle. The button-bashing combat between each shot (you need to battle your way to your ball) starts to grate, and the racing isn't much chop either. You'll battle and race against show stalwarts like Carl, the Mooninates, MC Pee Pants, the Plutonians, the Frat Aliens, tenacious pubic crabs and trees that uproot

themselves and attack you on the fairway.

So what does it have going for it? Well, the dialogue is a major highlight. In fact, it's probably one of the only highlights. The banter between the main characters and the colour commentary introducing each hole is hilarious. One

of the commentators is a humourless, cybernetic ghost who really can't hide his distaste for golf - "On my planet, golf is for gay people." So it's not PC, but it's a bit of a pisser.

Still, you can deduct points if you've never watched the show. **■ Luke Reilly**

PROS:

- It's 30 bucks
- It's hilarious

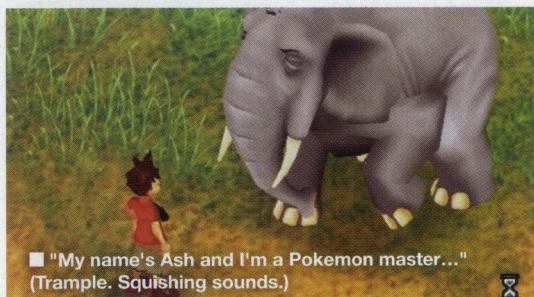
CONS:

- It's not that fun to play
- Mostly shonky

VERDICT:

It'll make *ATHF* fans smirk, but it's still an exceedingly basic game with no depth.

OFFICIAL SCORE:
05



■ GENRE: ADVENTURE ■ PLAYERS: 1
■ RELEASE: NOW ■ PRICE: \$29.95
■ DEVELOPER: NEKO ■ HD: 576i
■ DISTRIBUTOR: RED ANT ■ WEB: www.blast-games.com

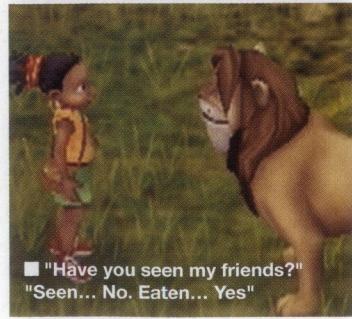


PS3 PS2 PSP
REVIEW



NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC SAFARI ADVENTURES AFRICA

Like being mauled by a lion...



This was never intended to be a game to be played, just pimped. National Geographic have hopped on the same supposed money train as the History Channel and commissioned this out with the hope their brand might shift a few units and produce some company pocket money. Hiring Neko Entertainment, the \$2 developer that brought the world *Crazy Frog Racer* on PC is testament enough to how much it actually cared about the final result.

Played from an isometric view you guide young adventurers Alex or Emma around a series of tiny game maps talking to animals and accomplishing one-button tasks. Occasionally you can hop on the

back of a lion or ibex and hop over some rocks, but only if you're on a good level.

Surprise, surprise, this one is a train wreck. While the game is aimed at players still on their first set of teeth, that factor seems less due to the intentions of the designers and more because young kids simply won't realise this is panty-filler. Apart from the worst presentation we've

seen in a game for some time, including a shocking audio mix, the pace of the game moves like a funeral procession - not exactly what gets kids pumped.

Fingers crossed the cable channels get the hint that their z-grade tripe is more offensive than entertaining and cease game development immediately. Adult Channel? You're excused. **■ James Ellis**

PROS:

- More socially acceptable than a lump of coal these days

CONS:

- It's a complete disaster that blows in every way

VERDICT:

It's no exaggeration to say it's more interesting watching paint dry.

OFFICIAL SCORE:
02

PS3 PS2 PSP REVIEW

■ GENRE: ACTION
■ RELEASE: NOW
■ DEVELOPER: SONY BEND
■ DISTRIBUTOR: SONY

■ PLAYERS: 1-8
■ PRICE: \$79.95
■ GAMESHARE: NO
■ WEB: www.us.playstation.com/

■ BACK STORY: Sony Bend is the Oregon-based mastermind, formerly known as Eidetic, Inc., behind the *Syphon Filter* series, along with 989 Studios. It has come out with little else – except for *Bubsy 3D* that is, which we'd all rather forget.

■ "My nose is so itchy... why does this always happen right before I'm about to shoot someone in the face!"



SYPHON FILTER: LOGAN'S SHADOW

Standing in the shadow of good times...

If we're in the mood for a tense stealth opera of gadgetry and guns, we turn to the grizzled ruthlessness of *Splinter Cell*'s Sam Fisher. Slow, steady and coldly efficient, what he might lack in an approachable demeanour he more than makes up for with an interesting story or three. If it's bizarrely inclined militant fiction that tickles our gaming palate, *Metal Gear Solid*'s ever enigmatic Snake is the answer – he's an altogether stranger prospect, but no gaming date is ever the same. Neither is he, for that matter. Awesome mullet, though.

If, however – and this is rare 'if', because the aforementioned masters of modern espionage are good at what they do and can feasibly satisfy our desires for many years to come – we're keen for an immediately satisfying combination of sneaky soldier-shooting and grand storytelling, then a third bachelor waits right behind door number three. Say hello to *Syphon Filter*'s Gabe Logan.

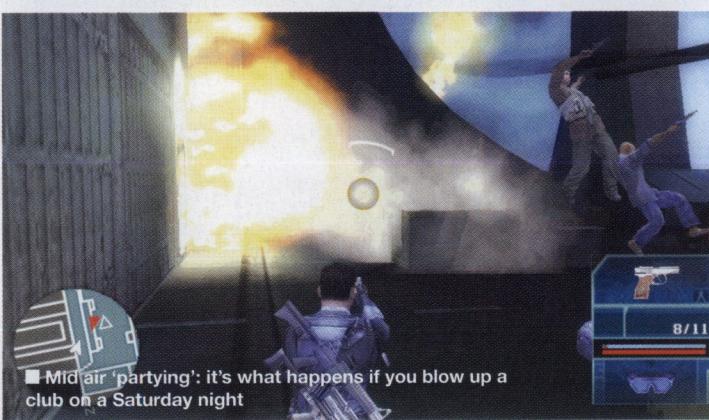
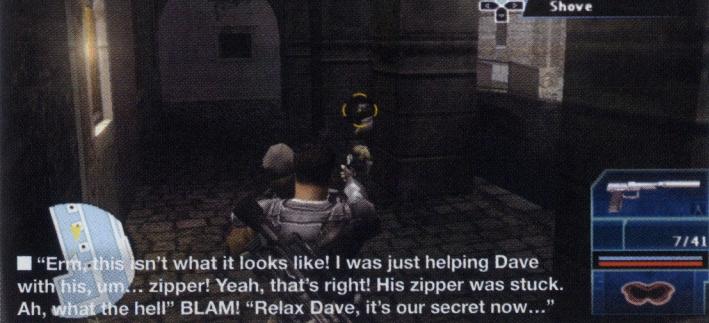
MISSING XING

Last year's *Syphon Filter: Dark Mirror* was a surprise. Not only because it was a

PSP effort that looked great, played great, and didn't take centuries to load, but because it proved that with a little love, Sony's humble handheld is capable of great feats of gaming awesome. The good news? *Logan's Shadow* is *Dark Mirror* hepped up on goofballs, in every respect. The bad news? When you taser the baddies they no longer spark up into a giant sizzling ball of sadistic death. Rather, they now just smoke and smoulder. But never mind that – there are excellent third-person

PlayStation.
Official Magazine. Australia
SILVER AWARD
9/10





shenanigans afoot, and a plot that'll have you missing your stop on the bus home.

Gabe's longtime action-buddy and gun-happy babe Lian Xing has buggered off without a word. Worse still, the government rat in charge of the IPCA has decided to shut the whole operation down because Gabe's first mission doesn't go that well and he reckons ol' Lian is a double-agent. Where's an agent to go without an agency? Anywhere, that's where, and Gabe's off; searching the globe for Lian and some very sensitive stolen technology. Its beginnings are modest but trust us when we say that by the end of this, you'll be blown away by the turns this tall tale takes.

VETERAN DOG, NEW TRICKS

The control scheme might be as flexible and as tight as – if not tighter – than *Dark Mirror*'s, but that doesn't mean there aren't a whole swag of new manoeuvres to get to grips with. Gabe can now blindfire, shooting off a clip without poking his head out from behind cover. You're unlikely to hit much with this, but it's good for pinning down aggressive enemies in preparation for your own assault. He's also taken a leaf out of Snake's big bad book and if you want to take a human shield, you can. They'll eventually fight back though so be ready to nail a random button press to execute a nasty fatality on

them before they do. Speaking of context sensitive stuff, it's all over the place here. And far from being a gigantic pain in the rear, it merely adds tension to the likes of unlocking a door or making shrewd use of the surroundings.

The cherry in this sundae of new features is Gabe's newfound ability to do battle with his foes underwater. Exploring the impressive-looking underwater environments is made doubly cool because you've got a harpoon gun, and you know how to use it. The physics at work here are amazing, as you'll have to allow for the effect of being submerged in water on your movement and weaponry, and it's done supremely realistically. The same goes for dry land destruction, too – objects such as crates and barrels tumble and explode just as you'd expect them to if you nailed them with a shotgun, and the ragdoll effects on the hapless opposition can be bone-snappingly cool to watch.

Regenerating health and a new grenade avoidance system (if one comes tumbling your way, you'll get a friendly



warning) change things up just enough that nothing feels rehashed or half-assed.

GET IN THE SPY CIRCLE

With controls this nice and gunplay this intense, multiplayer's back and beefier than ever. Up to eight of you can Ad-Hoc or Infrastructure it and burl through one of five game modes on any of seven maps, with an expanded roster of five factions to kill for. The stock Deathmatch, Team Deathmatch and Rogue Agent bits are joined by Retrieval (capture-the-flag with valuable items instead of flags) and Sabotage (the new Objective mode, essentially – do stuff while other side tries to trump you).

Hi, thanks for playing *Stealth Dating*. You've picked contestant 'C'; *Syphon Filter*'s Gabe Logan. He's a dab hand with a bowie knife and when he's not spreading the guts of terrorist insurgents across the deck of an aircraft carrier he's currently infiltrating, it's business as usual on your PSP, for the second time, and it rocks. **Toby McCasker**

LOGAN'S HEALING FACTOR!

For this outing, our boy Logan shares more in common with short 'n' hairy mutant man Wolverine than just an alias. Gone are the days of scavenging awkwardly for flak jackets when things get in the red. Instead, your health slowly tops itself back up when you find time for a breather. Hardly original, but this hasn't escaped Sony Bend, who isn't above taking the piss out of it a few times in-game.



PROS:

- New moves and mechanics
- Plays fantastically

CONS:

- The taser is no longer brutal
- Damn that cliff-hanger...

VERDICT:

Gabe Logan is king of the PSP's action stable for '07. Acquire immediately.

OFFICIAL SCORE:

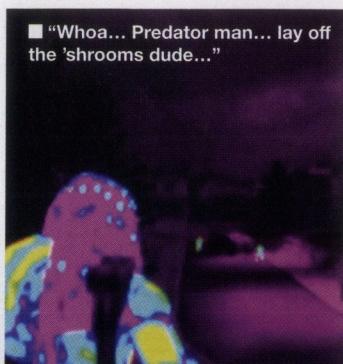
09

PS3 PS2 PSP REVIEW

■ GENRE: ACTION/ADVENTURE
■ RELEASE: NOW
■ DEVELOPER: REBELLION
■ DISTRIBUTOR: VIVENDI

■ PLAYERS: 1-2
■ PRICE: \$69.95
■ GAMESHARE: NO
■ WEB: www.sierra.com

■ BACK STORY: *Alien vs. Predator* started life as comic book salivated over by those fanboys who spend their lives arguing over which fictional character could beat another in a fictional fight. A lacklustre movie followed, and now a videogame.



CROSSOVER CRAZINESS

If you think that combining the Alien and Predator universes was stretching the old imagination, try reading the 2001 Dark Horse comic *Aliens vs. Predator vs. The Terminator*. The plot picks up after *Alien Resurrection* and has Ripley and Call discovering a Skynet resurrection program that remakes Terminators. But why'd they stop there? Let's see *Aliens vs. Predator vs. The Terminator vs. Robocop vs. Batman vs. Casper the Friendly Ghost vs. Judge Dredd*. Showdown of the bloody century!



ALIENS VS. PREDATOR: REQUIEM

We ain't got time to bleed...

We have a spinal cord to pick with the first *AVP* movie. It's not because it sucked, everybody knows that, it's because they unfairly depicted the Predators as a race of intergalactic girls blouses. Let's do some math here; a handful of grunts and an untrained Sigourney Weaver can slaughter roughly a hundred aliens with some pulse rifles, but a Predator can easily eviscerate an elite squad of Special Forces soldiers without much incident (assuming the Predator doesn't piss Arnie off when he's trying to "get to de choppah"). Thus leading us to the conclusion; the Predators got freakin' gyped.

Thankfully the food chain has received an aligning kick up the arse in *AVP: Requiem*; because as a deadly Predator powerhouse, you'll cut yourself a bloody/acidic swathe through any species stupid enough to be breathing in your vicinity. In

short; if it bleeds you can kill it.

From what we could gather; aliens have caused a Predator craft to crash in the town of Redneckville, Colorado, and you're a lone Predator janitor whose mission is to both eliminate the alien contagion and conceal the existence of Predator technology. *Requiem* is essentially a third person brawler that features the occasional 'find the switch' puzzle; but this usually tedious scenario is made more interesting by the inclusion of all the signature weaponry like dual wristblades, combi sticks, plasma launchers and the power disc.

The game focuses on Predator honour points, with greater points awarded for skillfully dispatching foes. To milk this correctly you'll enter first-person mode and 'tag' distant enemies; which presumably is the Predator equivalent of yelling, "Net, bitches!" before you shoot a

swish. It's a fiddly method to use though, and isn't nearly as well implemented as the user friendly lock-on combat system.

Graphically and aurally the game stands up quite well. Your Predator is a nicely rendered bad arse; and the multiple vision modes, authentic sound effects, creepy ambient music and impressive cloaking filter works wonders in immersing you into the *AVP* universe.

Requiem has some issues though; it has a threadbare plot that lasts five hours, plus you're obscenely powerful – so the only thing that offers you any challenge

is a tank. Most of the game you're just plowing through groups of soldiers and alien drones (who earn their title 'drone'). Then you just heal yourself and jump in for some more.

While the honour system does unlock cooler weapons, by the end you'll have them all, which ruins any replay value. While there's a multiplayer survival mode to mess with, beyond that *Requiem* feels somewhat empty. It's actually quite a shame because it controls nicely and it looks good – but it's shorter than a face hugger's lifespan. **Adam Mathew**

PROS:

- Stays true to the movie(s)
- Predator isn't a pansy

CONS:

- Enemies offer no challenge
- Too short an experience

VERDICT: *Requiem* makes for an ordinary hunt that could potentially shame your clan.

OFFICIAL SCORE:
05



■ "Hi everybody, my favourite colour, in case you hadn't noticed, is green"

■ GENRE: RPG/CARD GAME
■ RELEASE: NOW
■ DEVELOPER: KONAMI
■ DISTRIBUTOR: ATARI

■ PLAYERS: 1-4
■ PRICE: \$49.95
■ GAMESHARE: NO
■ WEB: www.konami.com/Konami



■ Screenshot from the new cel shaded FPS remake of *Cliffhanger*? Sadly no...



■ "Congratulations! You have just won an enormous golden robot!"

YU-GI-OH! GX TAG FORCE 2

Nup. Sorry. Just what the hell is this all about?!

There's a reviewing cliché that gets trotted out far too often. It's this old chestnut, "Fans of the series will enjoy this..." and so on. Well of course fans of the bloody series would like it – they're fans! Hence the term: 'fan'. It's like people saying you shouldn't have 'too much' of something. Well, yes, that's why it's called 'too much'!

Having said that, we're not even sure hardcore, rabid fans of the *Yu-Gi-Oh!* series will dig this slow, weird and bewildering mess. Although, it is a sequel so there must be someone out there who

liked the original. We'll break his knees.

For the rest of you, however, stay away. Why? For starters when the game begins you have, no exaggeration, one hundred million hours of text to plough through. Okay, it's more like fifteen minutes but still – what the hell?

After the incomprehensible opening you pick a partner and then walk around for a while, both of you looking like those bobble-head dolls, and have dull, bizarre conversations with NPCs and even more tedious card-based combat.

Look, there are probably folks out

there who will eat this up like pizza-flavoured beer lollies, but to be blunt it gave us the roaring shits.

Now if that's what you like in a game – and there must be some of you out there, which is downright scary – then by

all means 'play' this, erm... 'game'.

We'll fang out a prize if someone can explain to us what in the name of zombie Jesus is going on.

Answers on a postcard people.
■ **Anthony O'Connor**

OFFICIAL
SCORE:
02

PROS:

■ There are over 2800 cards... which is good? Possibly...

CONS:

■ "Boring" doesn't even begin to describe the epic tedium

VERDICT: Even with an open mind, *Yu-Gi-Oh! GX Tag Force 2* was just painful. Next!

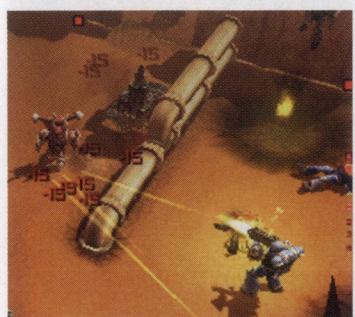


■ Argh a big Robotoy fight has just broken out!

■ GENRE: REAL-TIME STRATEGY
■ RELEASE: NOW
■ DEVELOPER: REDLYNX
■ DISTRIBUTOR: THQ

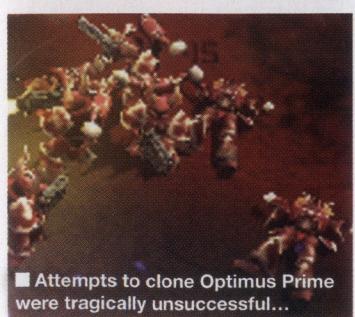
■ PLAYERS: 1-8
■ PRICE: \$69.95
■ GAMESHARE: NO
■ WEB: www.thq-games.com

PS3 PS2 PSP
REVIEW



WARHAMMER 40,000: SQUAD COMMAND

In the future there is nothing but war... very, very small war



■ Attempts to clone Optimus Prime were tragically unsuccessful...

When being handed *Warhammer 40,000: Squad Command* your humble reviewer was... let's just say expectations were low... very low. Not being terribly familiar with the series, the mental images conjured up were of hairy, twitchy, Hobbit-looking blokes you see at Games Workshop outlets. You know the ones; intense dudes painting their little figurines and getting heavily invested in the almost incomprehensibly dense 'universe' they inhabit.

Imagine, then, the delightful surprise when this title ended up being a quite enjoyable RTS. After a beautifully rendered cut-scene where a narrator bangs on about "the future being nothing but war"

and similar, you're thrust into a complex but easy to learn battle scenario.

You initially just handle armoured grunts who would probably look better if they were just a bit bigger. Soon, however, you'll be handling tanks, mechs and other diminutive but destructive gear. The difficulty level is quite high – but the turn based format is perfect for the PSP.

This isn't an experience that would work nearly as well on either the PS2 or PS3 – but for commutes – and the aforementioned Hobby fans of the series – this is actually quite a solid title and the multiplayer is the extra spice that makes it nice. Also you don't have to paint anything, which is a bonus for all.

■ **Anthony O'Connor**

OFFICIAL
SCORE:
06

PROS:

■ Pick up and play RTS – simple control system

CONS:

■ Difficulty level is just a tad bit too high for newcomers...

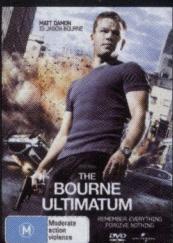
VERDICT: Won't change your life but it's a sturdy RTS game for the PSP.

Matt Damon is Bourne again, Nic Cage sees what's Next, Clive Owen is locked and loaded in Shoot 'Em Up, Adam Sandler switches teams in I Now Pronounce You Chuck & Larry and more...

DVD OF THE MONTH

THE BOURNE ULTIMATUM (M)

■ **STARRING:** Matt Damon, Julia Stiles, David Strathairn, Scott Glenn, Paddy Considine, Edgar Ramirez, Albert Finney, Joan Allen
■ **DIRECTOR:** Paul Greengrass



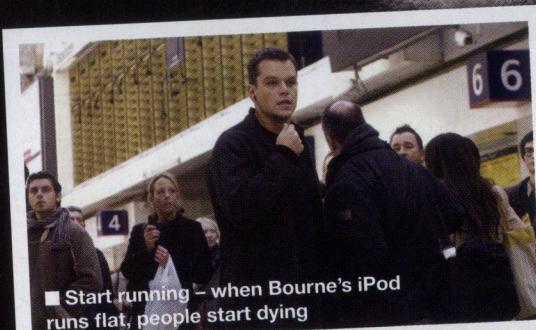
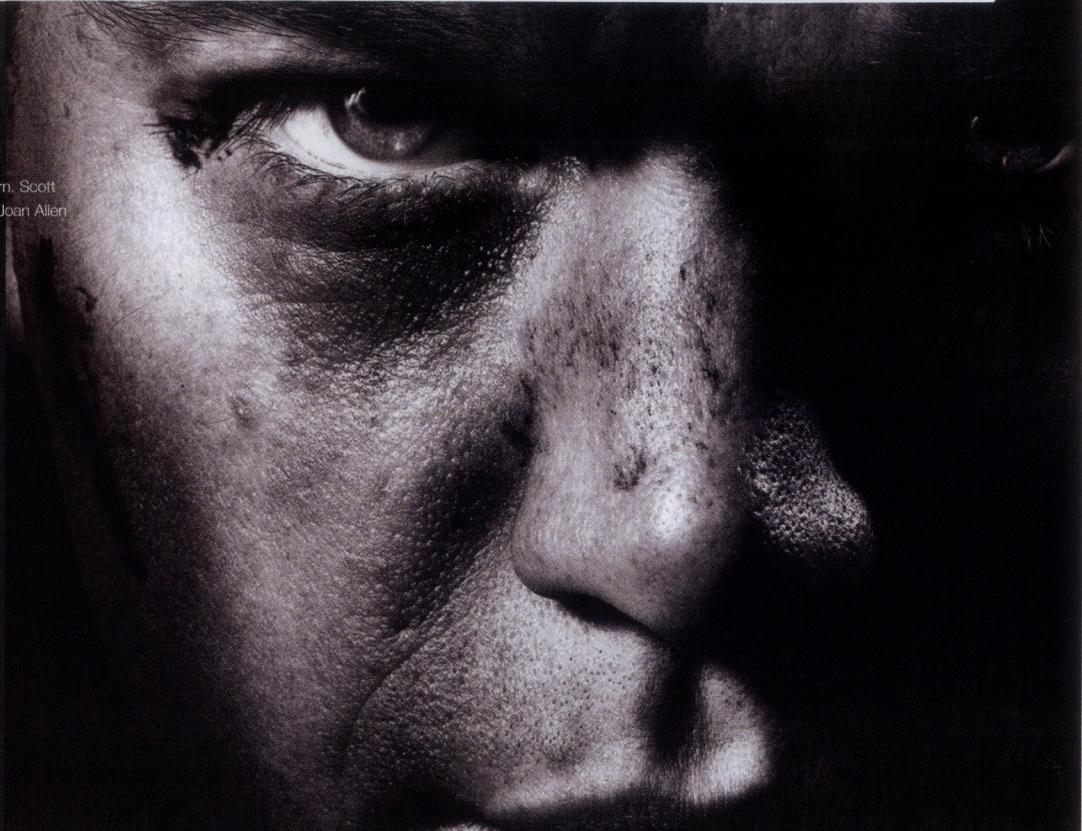
The Bourne films are so good even Bond started taking cues from them. *The Bourne Ultimatum* begins with Bourne tracking down a British journalist who may have valuable information about his past. Unfortunately,

the meeting is compromised – but not before Bourne discovers that the conspiracy involving his past runs far deeper than even he realised. Determined to finish it for good, Bourne sets about on a globetrotting cat-and-mouse game with the CIA, culminating in a final showdown in New York City.

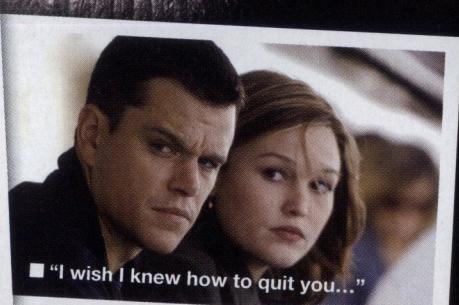
The Bourne Ultimatum is the giant exclamation mark on the most intelligent action-thriller series in cinema. Highly kinetic, it's one incredible set-piece after another – from a desperate and vicious Krav Maga brawl (arguably the best fight scene of the trilogy) to a furious car chase through lower Manhattan. It just never lets up, but Damon keeps it real with his steely portrayal of the increasingly resolute Bourne.

VERDICT: An incredibly satisfying conclusion to an amazing trilogy, *The Bourne Ultimatum* takes the series full circle and rollicks along to an explosive ending that'll leave you grinning like an idiot. Masterfully edited and wonderfully shot, *The Bourne Ultimatum* is set to become the template against which all future action will be judged.

★★★★★



■ Start running – when Bourne's iPod runs flat, people start dying



■ "I wish I knew how to quit you..."

UNFORGETTABLE?

A few famous memory-impaired movies. Remember these?



50 First Dates

A comedy about a woman with anterograde amnesia, rendering her unable to store new memories. At the beginning of each day, she loses all her memories of the past day and believes every day to be October 13, 2002 – her father's birthday.



Total Recall

When a construction worker decides to take an imaginary adventure to Mars by buying and implanting artificial memories he discovers someone else has previously erased and replaced his memory, and that he is not who he thinks he is.



The Notebook

A romance set in a modern day nursing home, an old man begins to read a love story from his notebook to his wife (who suffers from stage three Alzheimer's). The catch is the story is their own. This movie turns women into freakin' wrecks.



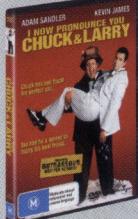
Memento

A thriller about a former insurance fraud investigator searching for the man who killed his wife. He suffers from anterograde amnesia, which renders his brain unable to store new memories. To cope he maintains a system of notes, photographs and tattoos.

COMEDY**I NOW PRONOUNCE YOU CHUCK & LARRY (M)**

■ **STARRING:** Adam Sandler, Kevin James, Jessica Biel, Dan Aykroyd, Steve Buscemi, Ving Rhames, Richard Chamberlain, Nicholas Turturro

■ **DIRECTOR:** Dennis Dugan



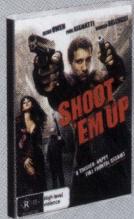
Brooklyn firefighters Larry Valentine (James) and Chuck Levine (Sandler) have been firm friends since the Academy. After saving Chuck's life on a call, and having missed the opportunity to name his two kids as beneficiaries, Larry, a widower, comes up with a way to repay him: becoming his 'domestic partner' so that his kids will be provided for if tragedy ever strikes. If you're wondering why this sounds a lot like the 2004 Australian comedy *Strange Bedfellows*, Michael Caton was wondering the same thing.

VERDICT: 90 minutes of gay caricatures and lectures on how wrong it is to mock others.

**ACTION****SHOOT 'EM UP (R18+)**

■ **STARRING:** Clive Owen, Paul Giamatti, Monica Bellucci, Stephen McHattie, Greg Bryk, Daniel Pilon, Ramona Pringle

■ **DIRECTOR:** Michael Davis



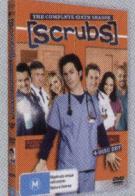
A tongue-in-cheek, jet-black action comedy, *Shoot 'Em Up* is the story of Smith (Owen), who is minding his own business (and eating carrots) when he spots a pregnant woman in a load of trouble and tries to save her. She delivers the baby but is killed, leaving Smith to protect the newborn from an army of hired killers. Boasts a body count twice its IQ, but any movie where the hero delivers a baby and shoots off the umbilical cord is fine by us. That's hardcore.

VERDICT: Combines the energy of a Looney Tunes cartoon, the violence of John Woo, the attitude of Tarantino and the cowboy justice of a classic Eastwood western. Preposterous but inventive, it just doesn't stop.

**TV****SCRUBS - THE COMPLETE SIXTH SEASON (M)**

■ **STARRING:** Zach Braff, Sarah Chalke, Donald Faison, Neil Flynn, Ken Jenkins, John C. McGinley, Judy Reyes, Elizabeth Banks

■ **CREATOR:** Bill Lawrence



A busy season of one of the best sitcoms on TV, *JD* and Dr. Cox deal with the fact they respectively got their new girlfriend and live-in ex-wife pregnant, Keith proposes to Elliot and Carla and Turk finally have their baby. Includes the Emmy-nominated episode 'My Musical'; a new patient at the hospital wakes up and sees everything happening around her as an extravagant Broadway musical. Like the fifth season, season six also ends of a major cliffhanger that'll have you counting the days for season seven.

VERDICT: Wacky and heart-warming, you know our thoughts on *Scrubs*. Get on it.

**DIE HARD 4.0 (M)**

■ **DIRECTOR:** Len Wiseman

■ **STARRING:** Bruce Willis



After over a decade of the quiet life, NYPD detective John McClane must face-off against a cyber-terrorist holding the US to ransom.

VERDICT: Top shelf action featuring one of the greatest everyman heroes ever. A must on Blu-ray.

**PLANET EARTH (PG)**

■ **PRODUCER:** Alastair Fothergill

■ **NARRATOR:** David Attenborough



An epic 600+ minute story of life on Earth. Five years in production, 2,000 days in the field, 40 cameramen filming in 200 locations, shot entirely in high definition, this is the ultimate portrait of our entire planet.

VERDICT: Must be seen to be believed.

**THE SIMPSONS MOVIE (PG)**

■ **DIRECTOR:** David Silverman

■ **STARRING:** Dan Castellaneta



When Homer condemns Springfield to destruction after dumping pig crap it's up to him to save his town and win back his family.

VERDICT: Doesn't stand up to repeat viewings like classic episodes do. A tad disappointing.

**BLADE RUNNER - THE FINAL CUT (M)**

■ **DIRECTOR:** Ridley Scott

■ **STARRING:** Harrison Ford



The result of restoration that began in 2000, *The Final Cut* is Ridley Scott's definitive version of the classic sci-fi cult favourite.

VERDICT: A true classic in the form it was always meant to be.

**ACTION****NEXT (M)**

■ **STARRING:** Nicolas Cage, Julianne Moore, Jessica Biel, Peter Falk

■ **DIRECTOR:** Lee Tamahori



Sci-fi genius Philip K. Dick's stories have been brought to the screen with varying success. *Blade Runner* and *Total Recall*, for instance, are good examples.

Paycheck, and now *Next*, are not. *Next* (based very loosely on Dick's short story ('The Golden Man')) features Nic Cage as Cris Johnson, a man with the ability to see two minutes into the future. Afraid of what will come of him if his secret is revealed he limits his powers to reading slot machines in Vegas, but he's sprung by the FBI and conscripted to help find a nuclear device brought into the US. Entertaining but daft.

VERDICT: Cage does his best, but too many plot holes make it tough. That's what you get from the director of *Die Another Day*.

**COMEDY****RATATOUILLE (PG)**

■ **STARRING:** Patton Oswalt, Brad Garrett, Lou Romano, Brian Dennehy, Peter O'Toole, Janeane Garofalo, Ian Holm

■ **DIRECTOR:** Brad Bird



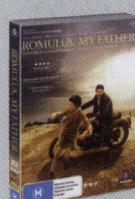
When a rat named Remy can't resist breaking into a Parisian restaurant to practise cooking he's busted by Linguini, a hopeless young busboy cleaning the kitchen. Together, however, they become a dynamic culinary duo, with Remy playing puppeteer under Linguini's chef hat. A movie for all ages with a positive message, *Ratatouille* is proof once again Pixar is the undisputed heavyweight of the animation world.

VERDICT: Featuring absolutely astounding animation and typically endearing Pixar characters, the craftsmanship of *Ratatouille* is breathtaking. For ours, *The Incredibles* edges this one out but *Ratatouille* is still a tasty treat.

**DRAMA****ROMULUS, MY FATHER (M)**

■ **STARRING:** Eric Bana, Franka Potente, Marton Csokas, Kodi Smit-McPhee

■ **DIRECTOR:** Richard Roxburgh



Romulus, My Father is a locally-produced drama based on Raimond Gaita's critically acclaimed memoir (which was awarded the 1998 Victorian Premier's Literary Award). It's the story of immigrants Romulus and his wife, the beautiful but deeply troubled Christina, and their struggle to bring up their son in 1960s rural Australia. Bana is fantastic as Romulus, but relative newcomer Kodi Smit-McPhee knocks it out of the park as the young boy, Rai. Smit-McPhee just landed the role as young Logan in the upcoming *X-Men* spin-off, *X-Men Origins: Wolverine*. It's certainly not hard to see why.

VERDICT: A little ponderous and won't be to everyone's tastes, but it's still a world-class drama.



The result of restoration that began in 2000, *The Final Cut* is Ridley Scott's definitive version of the classic sci-fi cult favourite.

VERDICT: A true classic in the form it was always meant to be.



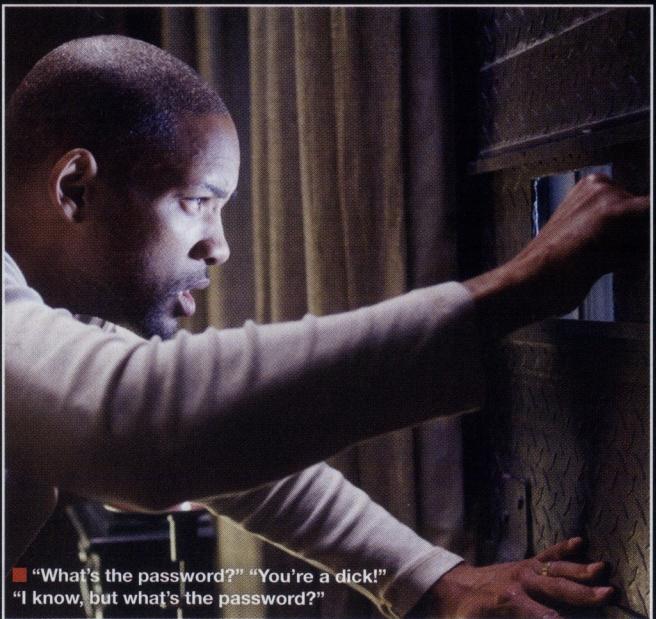


CINEMA

I AM LEGEND (TBC)

■ Director: Francis Lawrence
■ Starring: Will Smith, Alice Braga, Thomas J. Piliuk, Salli Richardson, Charlie Tahan

Based on Richard Matheson's novel of the same name (which has previously been filmed as 1964's *The Last Man on Earth* starring Vincent Price, and 1971's *The Omega Man* starring Charlton Heston) *I Am Legend* is the story of virologist Robert Neville (Smith). When a man-made virus wipes out the population of New York City, Neville, somehow immune, is the last survivor in the city – and possibly the world. Watched by the nocturnal mutant victims of the plague he works to find a way to reverse the effects of the virus using his own immune blood, but he's running out of time. Opens January 3



COMING SOON

THE DARJEELING LIMITED (M)

■ STARRING: Owen Wilson
Three brothers set off on a voyage across India and become stranded with eleven suitcases, a printer and a laminating machine. Opens December 26

ALIEN VS PREDATOR 2 (Rating TBC)

■ STARRING: David Paetkau
The iconic monsters from two top sci-fi franchises wage their most brutal battle yet in an unsuspecting Colorado town. Opens December 26

AMERICAN GANGSTER (Rating TBC)

■ STARRING: Russell Crowe
Going gangbusters in the US, Russell Crowe squares off with Denzel Washington on the streets of 1970s Harlem. Opens January 10

WALK HARD (Rating TBC)

■ STARRING: John C. Reilly
Walk Hard is the story of Dewey Cox, musician and national icon. Produced by Judd Apatow and jam packed with all the usual suspects. Opens January 24

BUZZ

The latest movie murmurs from home and abroad



Ain't It Cool News is reporting Christian Bale has been cast as John Connor in the upcoming fourth instalment of the *Terminator* franchise. However, according to other sources, Bale has been cast as the Terminator, and still others are reporting that Bale is in talks to play another as a yet unknown character. The first movie is scheduled for a 2009 release as part of a new trilogy. Honestly though, why even bother? No Arnold, no deal.



Seth Rogen (*Knocked Up*, *The 40-Year-Old Virgin*) has jumped aboard Kevin Smith's upcoming comedy *Zack and Miri Make a Porno*.

He'll play Zack, and according to Variety, the smokin' hot Elizabeth Banks (*The 40-Year-Old Virgin*, *Scrubs*) and will play Miri in the film. The story sees two lifelong friends that find themselves knee-deep in debt deciding to enlist the help of their friends to make a porno for some quick cash.



Rumours are circulating that Jordana Brewster is in talks to reprise her role as Mia in *The Fast and the Furious 4*. She'll be the third original cast member from director Rob Cohen's original to rejoin the series – Paul Walker and Vin Diesel are both already aboard. The Justin Lin directed sequel apparently begins with Brian (Walker) doing time after it was discovered he was responsible for Dominic (Diesel) escaping justice. The jury's out on this one.



Mark Wahlberg, former 'Funky Bunch' top dog made good has reportedly signed on to play everyone's favourite grizzled, bullet time utilising cop, Max Payne, in an upcoming movie based on the game. Predictably nothing concrete has been discussed regarding the plot of the movie itself, but we do know that John Moore (the man behind *Flight of the Phoenix* and *Behind Enemy Lines*) will be behind the camera directing as Mark Wahlberg shoots the crap out of numerous criminals in front of it. Awesome.



INTERACTION

WIN! 1 OF 10 ACTION PACKS

Matt Damon is on a mission to find out who he is and unravel the clues to his past in the action-packed third Bourne film, *The Bourne Ultimatum*. The Bourne trilogy is one of the best action trilogies ever made with a well structured story, fascinating characters and great action sequences. To celebrate the release of *The Bourne Ultimatum*, BLOCKBUSTER®, together with Universal Pictures Australia, are giving you the chance to win an incredible selection of action-packed DVDs. Each pack contains *The Bourne Identity*, *The Bourne Supremacy* and *The Bourne Ultimatum* as well as *The Good Shepherd*, *The Fast & The Furious*, *Inside Man*, *Jarhead*, *Cliffhanger*, *Lock, Stock & Two Smoking Barrels*, and *Smokin' Aces*.



For your chance to win 1 of 10 Bourne Packs, and for full terms and conditions, visit www.blockbuster.com.au Competition ends 31/01/08.

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The latest and greatest gadgets

TECH

WHAT IS...

MEGAPIXELS As you might have guessed, this is the amount of pixels that can be recorded by a camera. One megapixel equals a resolution of 1280 x 800. Many phones are now pushing four.

STYLUS A small pencil like device that allows you to navigate touch screen interfaces easily and accurately. Roughly about a hundred times better than using your fat, dirty thumb...



SONY ERICSSON P1

\$1,099

www.sonyericsson.com.au

This striking smartphone oozes power and excretes excellence, from its sterling MP3 player to its 3.2-megapixel camera.

Pushing email is quick and efficient via 3G, with a document reader and even has support for BlackBerry Connect. The 2.6-inch screen is great, and there's a dual-key QWERTY, a jog dial and stylus.

The only thing is, we'd sooner have one control method that worked than three that work together. Even so, this is an outstanding, work'n'play mobile.

VERDICT A useful emailer, but its other features are a bit lacking.



SCREEN 2.6 inches, 240x320

CONNECTIVITY 3G, A2DP, Wi-Fi

STORAGE 160MB internal/512MB card

BATTERY Talk 6.5 hours/10 hours (3G/GSM), standby 250 hours/440 hours (3G/GSM)

SIZE/WEIGHT 106x55x17mm/124g



TELSTRA HIPTOP III

\$679

www.telstra.com.au

THE hiptop's a quirky chap. You twist the screen to reveal the keyboard, then hold it in two hands, a bit like a PSP, using your thumbs to control it.

Setting up push email is effortless, the keys are well-spaced and the large LCD is terrific. Unfortunately, it's not so good as a phone, has no 3G and is a bit of a podger. As sidekicks go, it's perhaps more Batgirl than Boy Wonder, but it's still a good effort.

VERDICT A great smartie for email on the move.



SCREEN 2.6 inches, 240x160

CONNECTIVITY Tri-band, Wi-Fi, Bluetooth

STORAGE Mini SD card

BATTERY Talk 4.5 hours, standby 72 hours

SIZE/WEIGHT 59x130x22mm/182g

JOG DIAL A jog dial lets you scroll through items, really quickly and efficiently. You know that little thing in the middle of your mouse that lets you move windows up and down? Yep, that's a jog dial.

GPS You should probably know what this is, since it's kinda the 'in thing' nowadays, but a Global Positioning System allows you to locate your position via satellite, plot routes, and get maps instantly on screen.

QWERTY Refers to mobile devices having a proper keyboard interface, as opposed to utilizing the number keys in a traditional SMS manner. Makes it infinitely easier to send emails on the move.

SONY VAIO VGN-CR13GW \$1,899

www.sony.com.au

Typically Sony-stylish, despite a slightly crummy feel to the interior, this is a Vista-equipped halfway horse between thoroughbred and work mare.

Email is pinged to you courtesy of Outlook and Wi-Fi, and although the lack of processing finesse rules out seeing high-end games on it, the 14-inch screen is superb.

However, in a head-to-head, Tosh gouges Sony with its battery-life, then applies a portability body-slam. Pow!

VERDICT Tasty looks and quality email and web browsing, but wants for a bit of power.



SCREEN 14.1 inches, 1280x800

STORAGE 160GB

BATTERY 3 hours 50 minutes

SIZE/WEIGHT 249x43x335mm/2.5kg



RIM BLACKBERRY 8820 \$TBC

www.blackberry8820.com

RIM's Blackberry phones are acclaimed for their emailability and using the 8820 it's easy to see why. Head online, type in the address and password and you can set up push email in minutes.

The screen is excellent, while full-QWERTY splendour makes typing a cinch, although that fiddly little trackball is less than a boon at times.

Also the first BlackBerry with Wi-Fi, when you then throw in GPS, it's clearly the best mail-mate.

VERDICT The best-equipped BlackBerry to date is an email demon. Believe the hype baby.



SCREEN 2.6 inches, 320x240

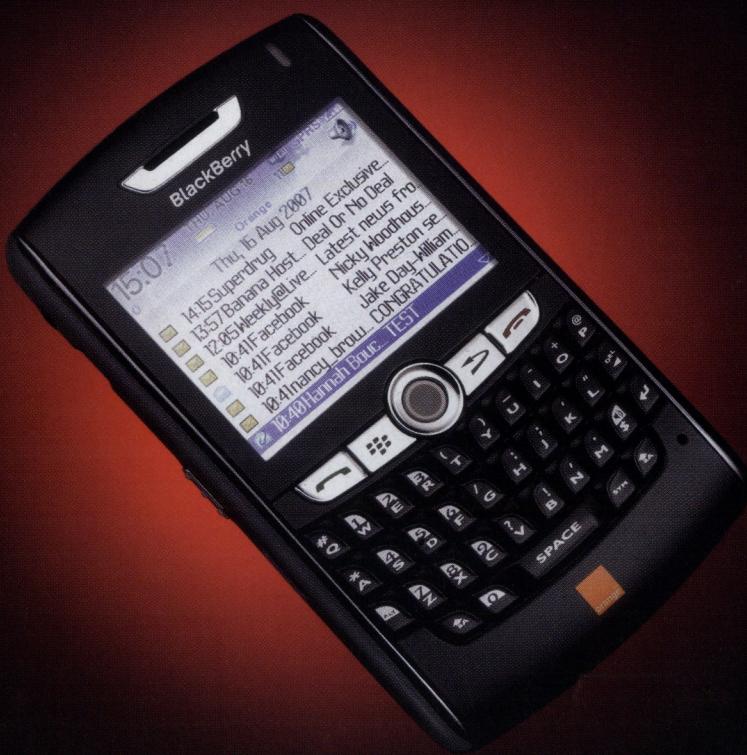
CONNECTIVITY GPRS, Wi-Fi, A2DP

STORAGE 64 MB internal + microSD slot

BATTERY Talk five hours,

standby 22 days

SIZE/WEIGHT 114x66x14mm/134g



DATABASE

All the games that matter on the PS3, PS2 and PSP!

FUTURE WATCH

The PS3 games to grab in the coming months

HAZE

Release: January 2008
So how in the blue hell did *Haze* go from 'present' watch to 'future' watch? Why don't you ask Ubisoft? And while you're there, give them a hard kick in the nuts from us. Yeah, that'll teach 'em. Coming out in January (hopefully)...

BURNOUT PARADISE

Release: Early 2008
Yet another game that's come late to the review party. Where the hell is it? We want to play it. Give it to us right this instant! After *Call of Duty 4*, we want some more of that 60fps action. We've been told that *Burnout Paradise* is the answer to that particular prayer.

LOST PLANET

Release: Early 2008
Killing bugs is usually easy, when they are the size of a two storey building: less so. This was a solid 'shooter with a twist' on that other console that we're not supposed to talk about, and can only get better in the new and improved PS3 version.

ROCK BAND

Release: February 2008
We hate countries that get awesome games before us. We're considering petitioning newly installed Prime Minister Rudd to declare war on the US for getting *Rock Band* early while we spend our lunch break drumming our desk with a couple of sharpened pencils. Where's the justice, eh? We're just as 'rockin' as the Yanks. More so even!

PS3 TOP 20



ASSASSIN'S CREED

A landmark in gaming history. Nothing short of awe-inspiring. The missions are samey, but navigating open-worlds will never be the same. The biggest leap since *GTA III*.



UNCHARTED: DRAKE'S FORTUNE

The best PlayStation exclusive on the market and the best looking console game to date. Frankly, *Uncharted* rocks up to the party and just plain owns everything...



CALL OF DUTY 4

Relentlessly exciting. Includes a dizzying variety of combat scenarios and stacks of bleeding-edge military hardware. You'd have to be insane, or a girly-man, to miss it.



MOTORSTORM

Fast, hard, dirty and utterly exhilarating, *MotorStorm* is essential for everyone's PS3. Not even the lack of split-screen can detract from this fantastic racer.



RESISTANCE: FALL OF MAN

The perfect launch title for PS3, and possibly the best console FPS ever made. The massive 40-player online deathmatches are more fun than you can imagine.



THE ELDER SCROLLS IV: OBLIVION

One of the deepest adventures we've ever laid eyes on. Simply put – awesome. This is arguably the only RPG you'll need for some time to come.



SKATE

A groundbreaking title that resets the bar for sports games in general. It kickflips Tony Hawk's to the curb with its simple approach. Irresistibly addictive and downright essential.



WARHAWK

There is no better multiplayer game on PS3 right now. Tighter than a bull's arse on fight night and smoother than a glass of Guinness, it's a superior piece of software.



HEAVENLY SWORD

Heavenly Sword is one of the best games we've seen in ages. A beautiful, yet deep, masterpiece and an awesomely enjoyable ride, albeit a rather short one.



GUITAR HERO III

Captures everything perfect about *Guitar Hero* with the best tracklist yet, but very nearly spoilt it all with the ridiculous new Battle Mode.



COLIN MCRAE DIRT

Colin McRae DIRT is an ambitious, accessible racer with a surprising amount of depth. The best rally sim ever? You better believe it. Rest in peace big guy.



THE DARKNESS

Tentacles and guns – the perfect combination. Stunning, original and gory as hell. You'd have to be dim to miss *The Darkness*.



STUNTMAN: IGNITION

The vehicular equivalent of a 10-hour-long orgasm. Gentlemen, start your boners. *Stuntman: Ignition* succeeds in upending the original in every way.



RATCHET & CLANK FUTURE: TOOLS OF DESTRUCTION

The biggest, wildest, most interesting, varied and downright gool' o' fashioned fun adventure these two have been part of.



THE ORANGE BOX

A stellar package; ripe, in season and packed full of vitamin value. If there isn't one title here that does it for you your gaming license is null and void.



TOM CLANCY'S RAINBOW SIX VEGAS

This Vegas adventure is definitely worth a look. A slick, gorgeous, accessible and utterly entertaining tactical shooter.



TOM CLANCY'S SPINTER CELL DOUBLE AGENT

Obsessive and gripping both online and off, *Splinter Cell Double Agent* will gobble you up. Obtain.



NINJA GAIDEN SIGMA

Ninja Gaiden Sigma is a treasure trove of gaming goodness. Dig it up now. It's tougher than a coffin nail. Not even Chuck Norris can beat this sucker.



FIGHT NIGHT ROUND 3

Still one of the best two-player games around, with visuals that will knock the wind (and most of the teeth) out of you. Great online too.



NEED FOR SPEED PROSTREET

ProStreet sees *Need for Speed* starting to come of age. Almost as good as the game we were expecting it to be, just a little more depth would've been nice.

PS3

BLADESTORM: THE HUNDRED YEARS' WAR 6

A solid mix of genres wrapped in an intriguing tale.

BLAZING ANGELS II: SECRET MISSIONS OF WWII 6

Not quite the ace of aces at this stage.

CALL OF DUTY 3 7

A solid but surprisingly unspectacular shooter.

CLIVE BARKER'S JERICHO 4

Sick and twisted but not enough variety.

CONAN 7

A bulldog of bloodletting, savage adventure and boobies.

DEF JAM: ICON 8

Somehow it's won its way into our hearts. Stupid fun.

THE EYE OF JUDGEMENT 5

Impressive tech, but it's still a \$160 card game.

FIFA 08 8

Finally puts *FIFA* on level terms with *Pro Evolution*.

FOLKLORE 8

Great graphics, memorable characters. A sweet surprise.

GENJI: DAYS OF THE BLADE 5

Plodding gameplay that belongs on the Atari 2600.

JUICED 2: HOT IMPORT NIGHTS 7

A top bit of racing fluff, although it's all a tad generic.

KANE & LYNCH: DEAD MEN 6

One part *Hitman*, one part Michael Mann; mostly a let down.

LAIR 5

A massive let-down. It feels rushed and unfinished.

MADDEN NFL 08 7

Some great improvements and plenty of modes.

MARVEL: ULTIMATE ALLIANCE 9

Great co-op and an exhaustive list of Marvel's greatest.

MEDAL OF HONOR AIRBORNE 6

A dinosaur of an FPS – wait for *Brothers in Arms* instead.

NBA LIVE 08 8

Best of its kind. B-ball devotees will adore it, guaranteed.

PRO EVOLUTION SOCCER 2008 8

Still the best soccer in the biz, but the graphics are dire.

SEGA RALLY 7

Not so much a revolution as one hell of a renovation.

STRANGLEHOLD 7

Max Payne inspired action, plenty of frantic fun.

TOM CLANCY'S GHOST RECON: AW2 8

A tense, realistic shooter, but *Rainbow Six Vegas* is better.

TONY HAWK'S PROVING GROUND 6

Struggles to escape the shadow of *SKATE*.

VIRTUA FIGHTER 5 8

As hardcore as fighting games get.

VIRTUA TENNIS 3 8

Some of the best fun four people can have on one PS3.

WWE SMACKDOWN VS. RAW 2008 7

A solid entry. A few new additions but still plays the same.



PS2

CRASH OF THE TITANS 5

A valiant attempt to breathe some life into the old franchise, but it fails on a few levels. There's just nothing much going on here.

GOD OF WAR II 10

There is no reason not to own this game. Whack on some pants and go buy it now.

GRAND THEFT AUTO: VICE CITY STORIES 9

No multiplayer or co-op, but a big improvement on *GTA: Liberty City Stories*. A fitting last hurrah. Can you feel it, coming in the air tonight?

**GUITAR HERO III: LEGENDS OF ROCK** 9

Doesn't have any of the online or downloadable options of the PS3 version, although it shares its flaws. Still, a top-notch track list make this the best so far.

JACKASS: THE GAME 5

Succeeds in being entertaining in short bursts, but there's not enough meat on the bones.

THE LEGEND OF SPYRO: THE ETERNAL NIGHT 7

Not a massive evolution but definitely puts the series back on track.

MOTOGP 07 7

Accessible yet challenging, it keeps an easy pace with the Namco series, but doesn't overtake it.

ROGUE GALAXY 9

The send-off to the PS2's RPGs that *God of War II* was to the action genre. *Final Fantasy* who?

SINGSTAR ROCK BALLADS 6

Seems to have gone wide of the mark with its definition of a rock ballad. Some killer, mostly filler.

SINGSTAR R&B 5

Too much 'urban contemporary', not enough old-school funk. Still, it has Luther Vandross.

**GANGBANGERS** 5

Relative newcomers to the classic enemy ranks, gangbangers come from all corners of the world to deal drugs, and shoot people.

**SINGSTAR R&B** 6

Seems to have gone wide of the mark with its definition of a rock ballad. Some killer, mostly filler.

SINGSTAR ROCK BALLADS 6

Seems to have gone wide of the mark with its definition of a rock ballad. Some killer, mostly filler.

SINGSTAR R&B 5

Too much 'urban contemporary', not enough old-school funk. Still, it has Luther Vandross.

ALIENS 5

Aliens are often on the wrong end of a rifle thanks to a particularly human trait. We don't like things that are different to us.

**CASTLEVANIA: THE DRACULA X CHRONICLES** 8

With fine work from Konami such as this, 2D will never die... it will rise again.

PURSUIT FORCE: EXTREME JUSTICE 8

Extreme justice > regular justice.

RICKY PONTING 2007 PRESSURE PLAY 5

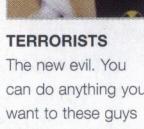
It's decent, but it doesn't have the depth of the PS2 version. No commentary? No test matches? What gives?

**SILENT HILL ORIGINS** 8

Technical niggles aside, *Silent Hill Origins* is a damn fine piece of survival horror.

STAR WARS BATTLEFRONT: RS 8

The Force? It's damn powerful in this one our young apprentices...

**TOMB RAIDER ANNIVERSARY** 7

If you're gagging for something new on the PSP, you could do a lot worse than this.

WIPEOUT PULSE 8

Fast, furious and not for the faint of heart. Bad-arse racing action sporting a solid challenge. *Wipeout* fans: aquire.

MAGIC MOMENTS

Great moments in PlayStation history remembered!



THE GAME: Colin McRae Rally

THE CONSOLE: PlayStation

THE YEAR: 1998

THE MOMENT: *Colin McRae Rally* may not have been the first rally game to wow punters, but it certainly made its impact felt. The way it took the best of *Sega Rally* and *V-Rally* and crafted a masterful rally sim was truly remarkable. The magic moment? Winning your first stage.

Obviously, that didn't happen immediately. Rallying is a risky sport, and something dangerous is always lurking around every corner. Like a tree, or a surly drunk who just lost his wallet in a taxi.

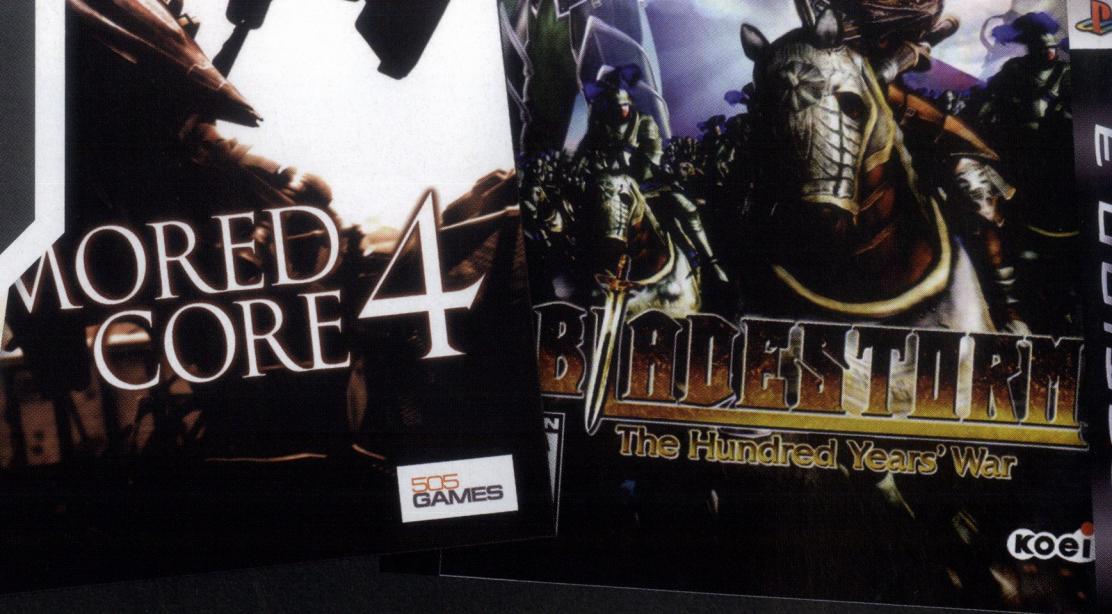
Or... a bigger tree. As a result, you needed to come to grips with the cars first. That's what *Rally School* was for. With the late, great Colin McRae talking you through everything you needed to know to keep your mud-devouring rally beast on the straight and narrow it was no time before you were powersliding around gravel bends like a true champion.

But you couldn't stay in school forever, and sooner or later you found yourself out on the world circuit mixing it up with the big boys in their expensive toys.

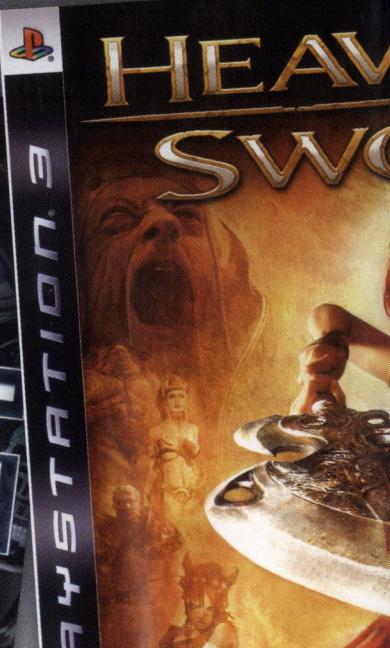
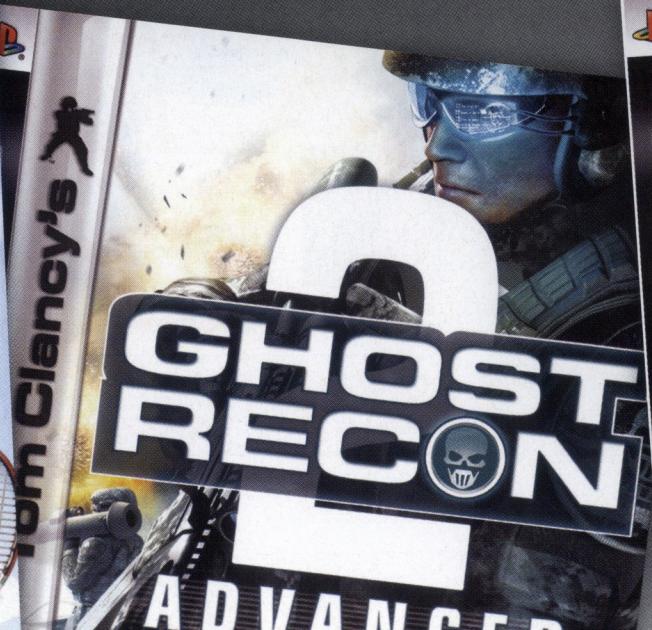
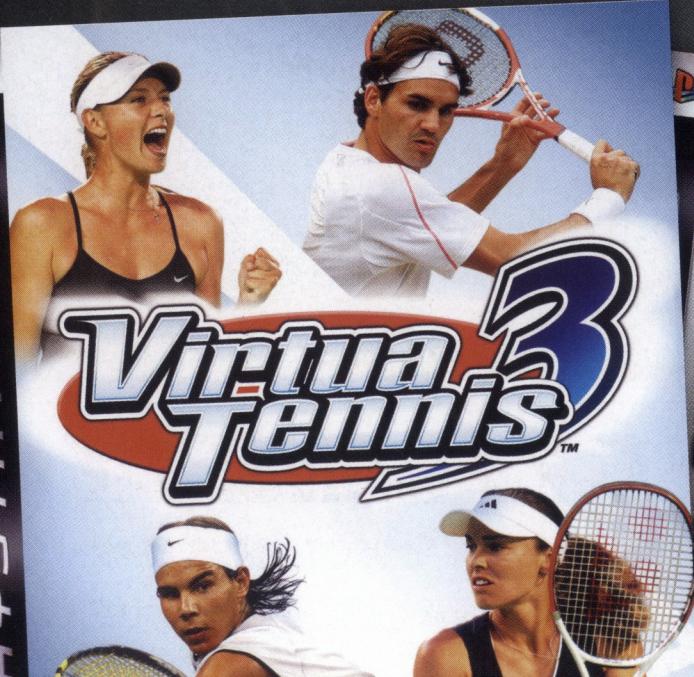
Over the course of *Colin McRae Rally*'s 50 or so events we don't doubt you cruised your way to dozens of epic wins – we did too. But your first win? That was special. It didn't matter what stage it was – the feeling was the same. Watching the split times appear as you blitzed through each checkpoint was a nerve-racking experience. A few seconds off the pack? Should you give it the beans, pick up the pace and risk wrecking? Opened up a slight window? Should you ease up little and play it a bit safer in spite of the possibility you'll lose your hard-earned lead? Every marker required a new decision, just like every corner demanded complete respect. Each one could be the difference between victory and defeat. Getting over the line mere fractions of a second in front, with opponents snapping at your heels, was incredibly satisfying.

February issue preview

NEXT



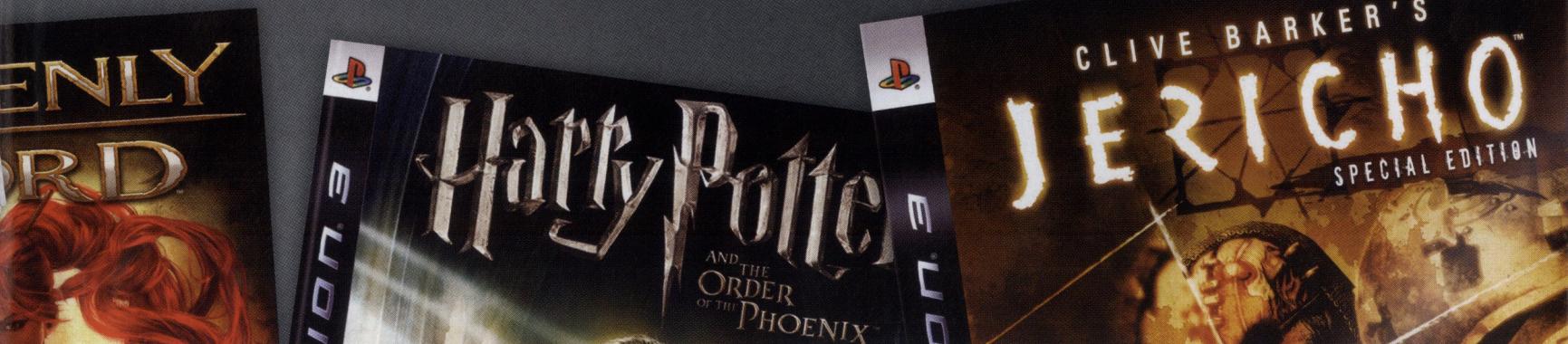
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CHEATS

Get the winning edge
with OPS' tricky cheats

PS3

RATCHET & CLANK FUTURE: TOOLS OF DESTRUCTION

Pull off the following
feats of skill and unlock
these awards:

Alphabet City

Teleport to each of the six
asteroids in alphabetical
order

Bolts in the Bank

Sell 20 Leviathan Souls to
the Smuggler

Cant Touch This

Don't take damage before
fighting Greasepalms
McGee

Cheapskate

Purchase a single
Combuster shot

Chorus Line

Make 11 enemies dance
together

Dancin' with the Stars

Make five enemies dance at
once on an asteroid

Dancing on the Ceiling

Successfully use the
Groovitron on a Gravity
Ramp

Disco Inferno

Use the Groovitron followed
by the Pyro Blaster

Even Better the Second Time

Complete Challenge Mode

Extinction

Kill all the Sargasso
Grunthors



PS2

WWE SMACKDOWN VS. RAW 2008

'Ravishing' Rick Rude

Buy in the WWE Shop for
\$210,000

'Rowdy' Roddy Piper

Buy him in the WWE Shop
for \$210,000

'Stone Cold' Steve Austin

After defeating him in a
Submission Match using
Bret Hart, you can buy him
in for \$210,000

Bret Hart

Defeat Bret Hart in the Hall
of Fame direct challenge
mode. Afterwards, buy him
for \$210,000

JBL

Buy him in the WWE Shop
for \$110,000

Mick Foley

Defeat Mick Foley in the Hall
of Fame direct challenge

The Rock

Defeat The Rock as Stone
Cold in 'Legend' Difficulty.
Buy him for \$210,000

Vince McMahon

Defend a championship in
24/7 mode. (\$110,000)

PSP

SILENT HILL: ORIGINS

Unlockable Costumes

Ambassador

Get the UFO ending

Brawler

Kill over 50% of all enemies
with only your fists

Butcher

Get the Bad ending

Cartographer

Looked at map less than
25 times

Codebreaker

Do the Konami Code during
your second playthrough
or up

Collector

Collect more than 300 items

Daredevil

Finish it without saving

mode. Afterwards, buy him
for \$210,000

Sabu

Buy him in the WWE Shop
for \$210,000

Shane McMahon

Buy him in the WWE Shop
for \$110,000

Terry Funk

Defeat Tommy Dreamer,
Sabu and Sandman in an
ECW Extreme Rules 4-way
match using any superstar
on 'Legend' Difficulty. Buy
him for \$210,000

The Rock

Defeat The Rock as Stone
Cold in 'Legend' Difficulty.
Buy him for \$210,000

Vince McMahon

Defend a championship in
24/7 mode. (\$110,000)

CHEAT OF THE MONTH

Call of Duty 4

Beat *Call of Duty 4* on any difficulty and let
the credits run all the way through. When they
finish, you'll start another mission. This mission
takes place on a plane that resembles Air
Force One, wherein you must fight your way
through a hoard of baddies, save the V.I.P. and
escape the plane in less than two minutes.
If you're a real double hard bastard you may
fancy trying it in Veteran mode, which forces
you to complete the mission in 60 seconds...
also, when you finish the game, you unlock
the Arcade Mode.



WTF?

Guitar Hero III: Legends of Rock

Air Guitarists: you may not understand the
whys and wherefores of their trade, but you
have to respect it. You can actually make your
guitarist in *Guitar Hero III* wield the old invisible
axe – it's as simple as strumming through
this cheat code. From the main menu, go to
Options, then Cheats, then Enter Cheat. Then
play the following notes. For example 'YB'
means you have to strum 'Yellow' and 'Blue'
together: YB, GY, GY, RB, RB, RY, RY, YB, GY,
GY, RB, RB, RY, RY, GY, GY, RY, RY.





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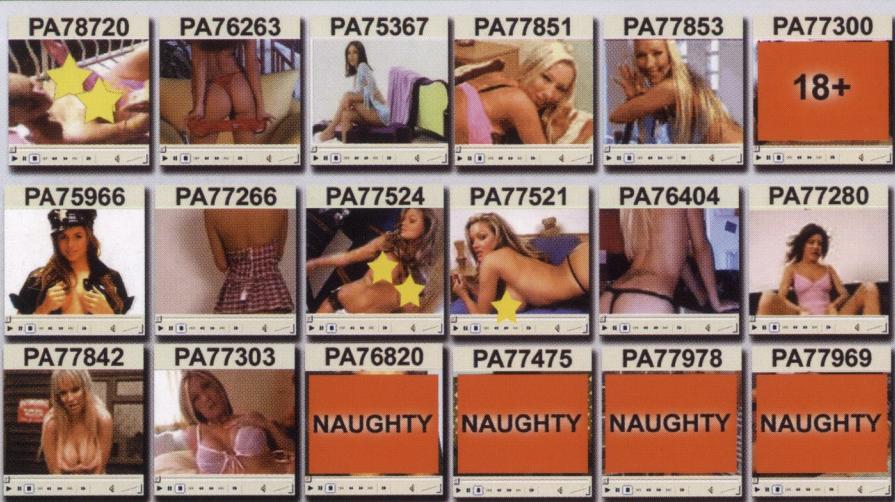
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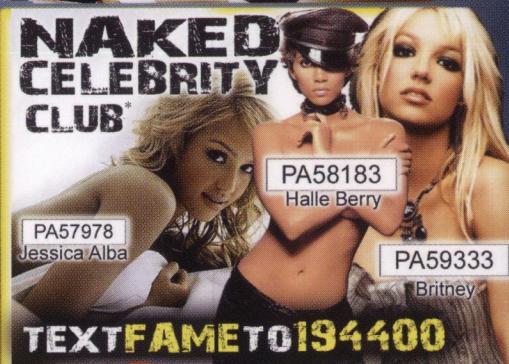
Celeb Shockers



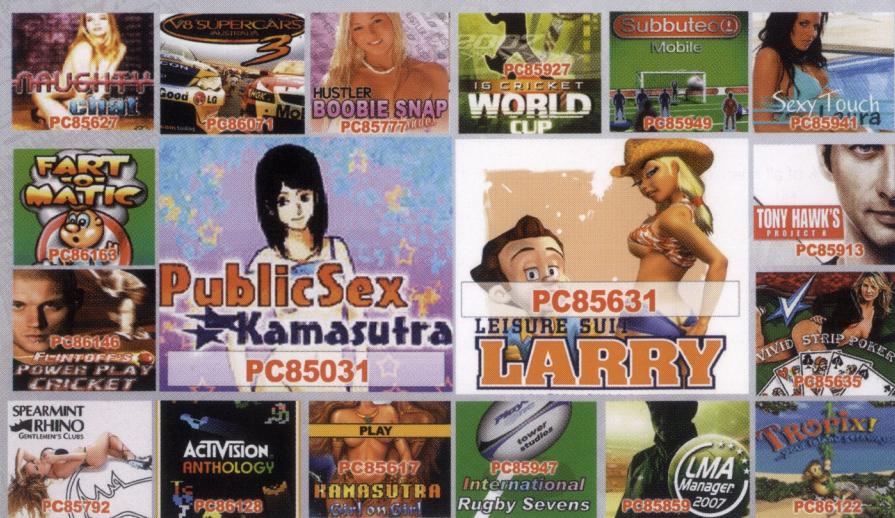
Fantasy Vids



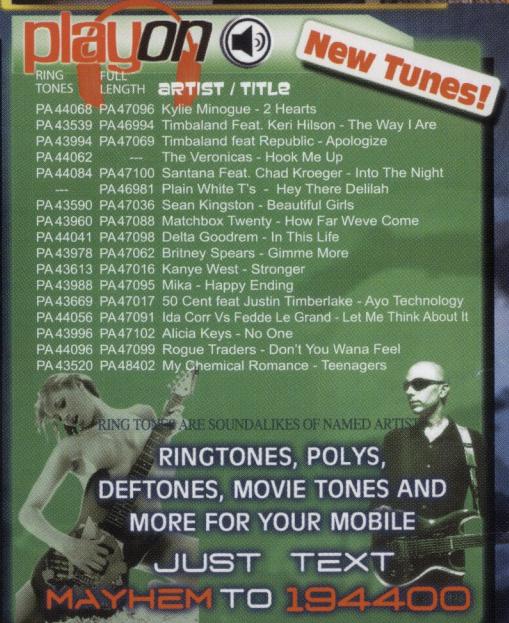
Babes



Mobile Java Games



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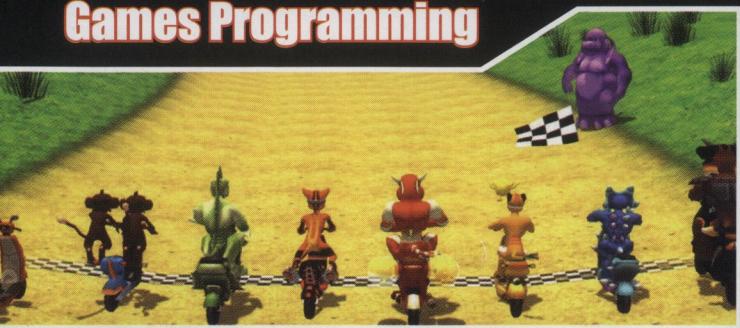


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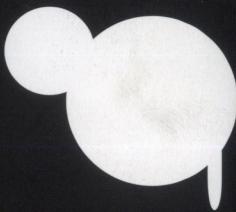
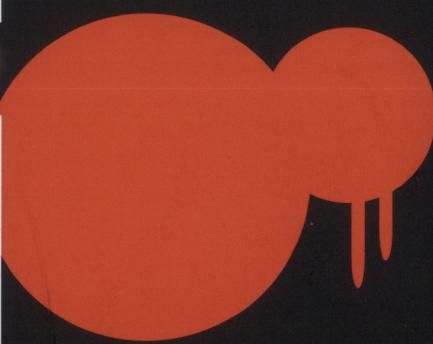
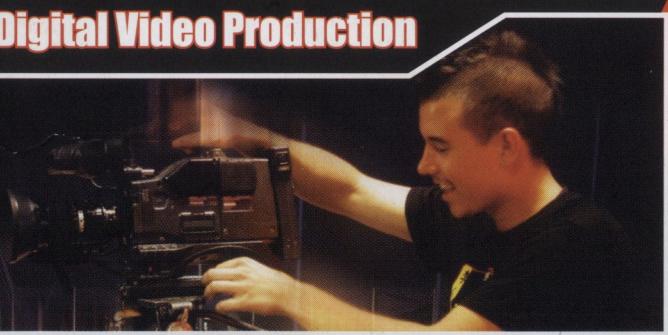
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